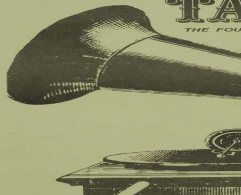
Volumes 1–2

PE
TA

THE FOU



PEOPLE TALKING

Here is the first of an occasional series giving voice to the people of the Fountain Community Association.

We hope it will start you talking and writing to us with your stories, poems, descriptions, memories and drawings of Exeter, and ideas and plans for the Exeter of the future.

S B/EXE/1890/FED
8006 10/19
DEVON LIBRARY SERVICES

Jenny Lloyd,
52, Belmont Road,
Exeter.

CONTRIBUTORS: E. Allen; J. Hammett; S. Pope; M. Turner.

3 (WSC)
- FEB80 00815

PUBLISHED BY
CASTLES BOOKSHOP
28 GANDY STREET
EXETER.

You had three pawn shops in Exeter: Bannisters, Brookings and Linscotts. From the end of Cowick Street to Mount Pleasant were thirty-eight pubs and eight wine shops; you had eight cinemas including one music hall which was the Hippodrome.

MEAT AUCTIONED

The big butchers were Stilman's in South Street, and Eastmans. Now seven o'clock on Saturday nights the shop was closed for customers. He'd put up his shutters and the only opening was the door. And whatever joints he had over he would auction. He'd hold up a leg of mutton and say, "Who'll give me ninepence for this?" And you'd put your hand up and he'd go, "Here wrap it up for that lady. Here's a little bit of breast of lamb." And if you looked poor he'd say, "Here, wrap it up for that lady over there". He'd give you that.

THREE MARKETS

You had three markets: the Lower Market, the Higher Market and the Cattle Market. The Higher Market was for farmers' wives that would come in with butter, cream and stuff; that was in Queen's Street. And the Lower Market was for garden produce, greengrocery stuff. Wainwrights was there, the big toffee people; Parkers used to be the big biscuit man. You'd wait till after four o'clock Saturdays and you could buy a pound of broken biscuits, for about a penny. Or you'd accidentally make a tin fall so you'd get your broken biscuits. And the Cattle Market of course was Fridays. It was in Bonhay Road where the new bridge is. Now the butchers' market was Monday. They'd take what they bought to the slaughterhouse which was in Exe Island. They'd slaughter it there and the butchers would have it fresh in their shop the next day.

NEWTOWN

Now Newtown was self-sufficient really. There were about a thousand houses, counting the courts. We had sixteen pubs and four off-licences. We had forty-three shops; they were all little private shops. There was only one midwife, Nurse Rowe. She used to charge three and sixpence, but if you had a couple of drops of gin she'd knock a shilling off. She only came for three days. I suppose taking the average home you could say there were four in every house. There was Jimmy Welland, the fish man; he only had one arm; he had thirteen kids though. God job he only had one arm.

RAG AND BONE

The rag and bone man came round with a sack on his back and he'd have a spring scales; mind you they were all doctored. He'd pick up your parcel with the hook and if you'd a pound you got threepence and if you had five pounds you still got threepence; he didn't let them go down too far. Then he'd pick out the good, knock on the door and sell. He'd get treble price.

FISH FROM THE ROAD

And a man called Melhuish used to come up from Lympstone three days a week. He was a fisherman; used to do the fishing in the river; he had a three wheel barrow. He'd come round and you'd have your fish: your flat fish, a little plaice, and whiting and mackerel in season. You'd buy off him; cheaper, see.

Then Lethridge came round with rabbits. He'd have a mawn, a square basket, and a bar across; you paid threepence.for the rabbit if he was

skinned, but with his skin on you paid four pence 'cos you could always get a penny for the skin.

MILK DIPPERS

The dairy shop did a milk round. You carried the churns on a yoke. The yoke fitted your shoulders and a churn hung down each side. When you bent down and let the churn rest, the handle would drop and you'd unhook them. You'd say, "How much today, 'mam?" "Oh, I'll have a pint of new and a pint of skol." That's the skim milk. You'd have two separate dippers. You'd take the cover off; you'd dip in the milk and you'd tip into her jug. The milkman used to say, "Careful, my son; always hold the dipper over the mouth of the can, then it drops back in there again." Course the profit was very small - you had to be very careful.

HARD CHIP DAYS

My husband's mother and father used to keep a little general shop. They used to sell everything in small quantities, people were so poor: three happence of pepper, two pennyworth of sugar. And even then she used to get terribly worried because she was ever such a kind person. She used to let them put it on the slate and even then they hadn't got the money to pay.

My mother never used to pay for anything till the end of the week. Father would come home; a golden sovereign he'd have then. Mother would say, "Go to Mrs. Marments"; that's the little grocer; "and see what I've bought for the week. Go round Mr. Hill's, the baker, Mr. Collin's the milkman. Go round the butcher's."

WE DESIRE
MOST RESPECTFULLY TO DRAW
YOUR ATTENTION
TO OUR
SPECIALITIES
IN
GRATES, RANGES,
CHIMNEY PIECES,
AND OTHER GOODS
Mentioned in our Advertisement, Page 149.

Newcombe & Co.,
109, Fore Street,
EXETER.

Illustrated Catalogues Post Free.

And I'd come home and say how much it was. "Two and nine you owe for the milk;" perhaps one and three for the bread and so on. I'd go to the first shop and they'd give me the change and I'd pay all these bills. It'd leave mother six bob to go through the week. Perhaps she'd keep back a shilling towards the rates; course the rates were only about seven bob then. And the rent was one and nine. Remember she only had a pound.

EARNING EXTRA

Our mothers never went to work. Soon as a nipper came along, finish, your job's home; you've got a nipper and your work days are finished. If they had to earn a bob or two, then they'd take in washing. When the season came around I'd go up with a little box barrow that you'd make yourself and collect some blankets; and you'd bring them home and your mother would wash them. She had twopence for it. And father after his daily work would go up Tiverton Road to Luxmore Jones who was a director of his firm and he would do the garden; he'd be up nearly all night sometimes nursing the orchids. We kids would go up and weed the tennis lawn; take out the daisy roots. We'd go up about six and come home again about eight and we used to get threepence.

FARTHING BREAKFASTS.

To the Editor of the "Express and Echo."

Dear Sir,—May I ask if you will kindly acknowledge 10s 6d towards the Farthing Breakfasts from "Icon," who desires the acknowledgment to be made in the "E. and E."

It may interest you to know that we supplied over 900 breakfasts to poor school children last week, and even that number did not meet the needs of all who came, as some were turned away. In former years you have kindly rendered us very valuable assistance by making an appeal on behalf of the children. We can assure you there is as much need this year as before; in fact, there seems to be a great eagerness on the part of the children to get to the breakfasts. No doubt you are aware that there are many men out of work in the city, and quite as much hardship and suffering as in former years. Therefore I again ask your kind assistance in this good work.

Yours faithfully,

A. DAVEY.

BORROW BLANKETS

When the winter started, you could go to the Friars, there by the Salvation Army, to Exeter Blanket Society. Now people from the poorer classes could have blankets; it all depended how big a family: a man and wife and one child could have one blanket; two blankets if you had two children. You'd borrow those blankets for the winter, October to April.

A FARTHING OF ALL COINS THE LEAST HELPS TURN A FAST INTO A FEAST

If you had a lot of children, before they went to school, you would send them down to West Street to the Farthing Breakfast Shop. For a farthing they could have a mug of cocoa and a big round of bread and jam, or a currant bun covered in butter. So you'd have something to eat.

MEAT FOR FATHER

And if you were really poor you could get soup. You know those washstands in the bedroom with the basin and jug. I used to go down the Lower Market carrying this washstand jug; take twopence, and they filled it up with pea soup. As soon as I got home, mother would take out the little bits of bacon; father had that; that was his tea.

All the meat used to go to Father in those days.

I think people didn't have the nourishment. The weaklings were weeded out.

FRESH FOOD

No, we had the nourishment: the cows were killed Monday and we were eating it Tuesday and Wednesday. Vegetables were picked from the garden and sold, now they've got to go from Cornwall to Covent Garden and then they come back again and you have them; Fish does the same thing: goes up to Cleethorpes and back again.

We had a joint every day. But the family next door, we never knew till later, they were really poor; the children sat round the table at meal times with an empty plate and knives and forks and tapped the plates to make out they were eating.

If you didn't have a very good oven, you'd carry the baking dish down to the bakers's Sundays, and he'd bake it for you; a penny he'd charge. In his big ovens, twenty or thirty meals he'd bake.

WORKHOUSE

You had a workhouse in they days; you know, where the City Hospital is. In Clifton Road, Newtown, from five o'clock onwards, evenings, you'd see all these old vagrants coming along and they were vagrants in those days. They'd have their little bundle on their backs and a walking stick. They weren't allowed in there till half past five, or six I believe it was. They'd go in and have a bit of a meal and a doss for the night. And they had to do an hour's toil before they came out; well that hour was chopping sticks.

My brother in law used to work at Bannister's, the Pet Shop. Now Monday morning the people used to come up from the West Quarter, the poor quarter. Half past eight the shop opened and you'd see them all queuing up in South Street with their parcels. When they went inside my brother in law used to take in the pledges. The woman would open her parcel and she'd take out her husband's suit; he wore it Sundays. She'd be lent three bob, three and sixpence on that suit. They used to put them in Monday morning and take them out Saturday night so father could use them Sunday. Each week when it was a week older, they'd take a penny off till eventually the suit wore out.

BUSY RIVER

In those days the river was a busy place. Now the boats under their own steam would come up the channel and go into Exmouth. They couldn't come up Topsham way on their own; they always had to have a pilot; that would be a local Exmouth fisherman. Every week you could guarantee four boats coming up the canal: coal boat for the gas; then a coal boat for the electric, then one come up with grain. And about once a month the wine boat would come up from Spain or France. Course it was port and sherry and they called it pipes of port. It had to go through customs. The wine merchants would come for their wine and their name would be on the pipes of port. They had to pay duty on it before they could take it out of the Customs House.

Headquarters of the E.A.R.C.

Port Royal Boat House

(Opposite Entrance to the CANAL)

Boats

..OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS..

FOR HIRE.

C. EDWARDS.

DOUBLE LOCKS

The double locks would have to be opened, the boats would shut off the steam and then if the boat wasn't too heavy they'd hire a council horse and they used to hook a chain onto it and up the tow path the horse would pull that boat. Once he started and got on the move it was easy.

FRENCH ONIONS

The French onion boys used to come up. They would live in some of those wharves, four storeys up they were. Before they came out selling they would trace all these onions, make strings of them; then have them over a pole on their shoulder. They'd stop perhaps two, three months. They were like the locals; everybody knew them.

TIMBER

Timber used to come as well, from Sweden. They'd unload in the basin. Some would come to Claridges, in Commercial Road. Now buyers used to go out from Claridges to Stoke Woods or perhaps a little beyond, Rewe or somewhere there, and say, "We'll buy the wood." And they'd buy all the timber. Then it had to be cut and taken to Commercial Road.

They had long carts you could extend with a pole in the middle, all according to how long the trees were. They'd have perhaps six horses, really heavy draft horses on there. And if they had an extra heavy load, just where the triangle is, by the bus station, there'd be a couple of horses stood there from five o'clock onwards; they would hitch them on to get them up the litle knap in Heavitree Road. Then they'd take them right the way through the West Quarter.

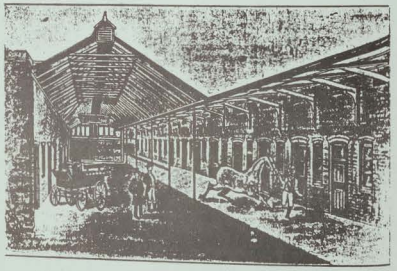
It was wonderful to see the horses take the strain; 'twas education to see a horse move.

STRONG'S

Horse Repository,

150, SIDWELL STREET,

EXETER.



Match Pairs and Single Harness Horses and Hunters to be Let out on Job for any period, or Sold. Trial allowed.

WILCOCKS & REW, *Proprietors.*

THE MAIDS

You had your little rival gangs where girls were concerned. There was the Newtown gang and you had your girl. You used to say, "Oh, I'm sweet on her." The girl I was sweet on, her mother kept the fish and chip shop; I expect that was why I was sweet on her. Then you had the gang from South Street - they'd come up to Belmont and we'd play them at football. Then they'd start on our maids so Sundays we used to go down under Northernhay, after church; you had to go to church; and we'd fight over the maids. But when you say fight; there wasn't much; it was more argument than anything else. You tried to be brave in front of the girls.

SUMMERTIME

Now in the summer if it was a fine Saturday or Sunday your mother or father used to take you up the top of Rosebarn Lane. There used to be a farm up on the top with a couple of swings. You'd go in there and you'd have a glass of milk and a scone with a bit of jam and cream; it was a penny, the milk and the scone.

COURTING DAYS

When I was twenty and I was courting I used to get half a crown a week; I worked for the gas The Hippodrome was operating then, the Music Hall. Well Thursday nights when we got paid, the young lady and I would go to the Hippodrome. On the way up we went into a sweetshop called Drakes, in Paris Street and we'd half a pound of caramels or some sort of mixed sweets which was eightpence, and we'd go to the Hippodrome in the shilling seats and there was my half a crown gone. Then we had to walk for the week. We walked the country.

THE INTRODUCTION

My friend and I used to play every Sunday in the band up Northernhay. And we used to have a game of billiards Tuesdays. Then one week he came and said "I shan't be here next week."

"Why?" I said.

"Well," he said, "I've been and took up with a maid."

"What the hell do you want to do that for?"

Well the Sunday we were playing up Northernhay and in a little break, he said to me, "That's my maid over there, look."

She was sitting on the rail where the goldfish are. He said, "Come on; I'll give you an introduction."

So over I went and just jokingly I said to her, "Haven't got a sister, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have," she said. "She's the nanny up the Chemists', opposite the old General Post Office."

I said, "What night out does she have?" She told me the particular night, so I thought I'd go up and see her from the distance, see what she was like.

MONTHS TO KISS

Well, I waited around the general post office and saw her coming along. I introduced myself to her; plenty of cheek then, I had. I didn't mind then, 'cos you were harmless in those days. I walked up with her; she lived in Paris Street then. Just as we turned the corner of Paris Street, her father came along. That was a different kettle of fish.

The Exeter & County Toilet Club.

D. Theeuwissen,

HIGH-CLASS HAIR DRESSER & PERFUMER.

Ladies' and Gent.'s Rooms on the Ground Floor.

11, High Street

(OPPOSITE THE GUILDHALL RESTAURANT).

These Saloons are Replete with all the Latest and Up-to-Date Appliances. Manicure on the Premises.

Telegraphic Address: "Theeuwisen, Exeter."

Anyway, he said, "Hullo, what company have you got then? You haven't been out five minutes, picked up with a boy already."

So I said, "It's alright, I'm just walking her home, walking down the road with her. I play in the band with Alf, who Win walks out with."

"Oh," he said, "that's alright. But you go home and see your mother, mind."

Well, I married her. Two friends and we married two sisters. Best women that walked upon the earth.

This issue is in two parts: first memorable characters of Exeter; then details of where the housekeeping money went before the Second World War.

Readers may like to know how the magazine is put together. Some of the items are written; some are recorded conversations which have been transcribed and edited. In some of the items, the different scripts indicate a change in speaker.

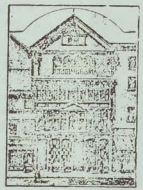
Contributors: Hilda Brown, Evelyn Hyde, May Balkwill, Stan Pope.

J. & G. ROSS,

227, High St., EXETER.

HIGH CLASS

CLERICAL ÷ TAILORS,



SERVANTS' LIVERIES.

LADIES' RIDING HABITS.

MAKERS OF THE CELEBRATED "Zugon Shirt."

MADE TO MEASURE. A Perfect Fit Guaranteed.

WATERPROOF ÷ CLERICAL ÷ TWEED ÷ OVERCOATS.

New Autumn Unshrinkable Flannels.

TAFFY FULFORD

Old Taffy Fulford was a regular one; he was a weedy little man in a tatty overcoat. You wouldn't recognise him unless he was beside his horse and cart or serving in his sweet shop. The shop was in Paris Street opposite the old Palladium Cinema. It was a dark cavern of a place; the window was crammed with trays of home-made toffee; there were jars of sweets lining the walls and he had a beautiful green, yellow and blue parrot: the Sharps toffee parrot.

He did a good trade on Sundays when at least half the pennies given for Sunday School collections went on a handful of toffees. His wife used to run the shop with a daughter he had, Gladys, while he'd go round with the poor old broken down horse and his cart which was a walking hardware store. It was piled high with all kinds of merchandise, from candles to mouse traps. We kids would dash indoors to get a clean jam jar and queue up to receive in exchange a screwed up bit of newspaper containing a few old stuck together sweets or a windmill that he used to make himself out of wallpaper. When he was in a nasty mood he would sometimes refuse to do a swop - and we had no money to buy things. There were sad faces on a Monday when there was no barter. He would say, "I don't want your jam jars. Don't your mother want any matches or candles?"

This interesting old Elizabethan style building, situated at the junction of North and South Street, was built in 1614. The little gilded equestrian figure upon the gable is supposed to have been erected during the Grand Rebellion as a sign that the house was a refuge for those on the King's side. King Charles II is said to have found refuge here, after his defeat at Worcester 1651.

In the winter he would be on his rounds in the dark and he'd carry two old glass lanterns with candles stuck inside for light. I loved the enamel ware that he carried; lovely red and green candlesticks and tea cans: a tea can was an enamel pinto container with a lid that the workmen used to take with them each day filled with cold tea.

When he died no-one took over his round; his old stable was stacked high with jam jars as the market had closed down; he had no return for all his hard work.

My husband had a story about him. He was standing around with a group of boys when Taffy came along and the shaft of his cart broke. He had to take his horse back so he asked one of the lads, a chap called Bishop, if he'd mind the cart. Of course all the kids came around and he gave away all the stuff and then they went and left the cart.

Every Carnival Taffy would dress up his daughter Gladys as a Queen or Eastern Princess and decorate his pony and trap and parade in the procession.

ARTFUL THOMAS

Artful Thomas was in all the carnivals; he must have raised a record amount of money for any charitable organisation who asked for his help. St. Thomas Carnival would not have been complete without him. Artful would be parading and conducting the whole proceedings. In those days the carnival was lit by burning oil flares, carried on a plank with holes cut in for the flares; he would dance around and pinch a flare which he would wave around like a whirling dervish.

One of his big days was the Wonford Fete. This was a very big occasion not only for Wonford but for the city. Artful always spent the day as "Top the Topper" - this meant he was behind a net dressed in a top hat and tail coat, white gloves and bow tie. He walked up and down behind the net with just the topper above it; then everyone would throw tennis balls to knock the hat off; I think it cost 3d for 5 balls. His remarks had all the adults laughing. We thought he was very brave as some of the shots were aimed more at him than his hat.

Our carnivals were marvellous. There was nothing automatic about them - it was everybody's shoulder to the wheel; all had to help. Old Faddy Bolt, the baker, who was huge, used to be dressed as John Bull, with the hat and the flag on the waistcoat. We had these ticklers, a metal handle with a bit of hair stuck at the bottom and we used to go round tickling, specially the boys with the girls. It was such innocent fun.

Artful was also paid to do advertising stunts. Once he dressed as a chicken; a yellow chicken. This was for a film of Charlie Chaplin, "The Gold Rush" in which Charlie turns into a chicken in his partner's mind when they are snowbound. Artful walked around town all week, clucking and crowing and occasionally laying an egg; a golden one, of course.

On another stunt he was advertising the new 'in thing' - interior sprung mattresses. For this he had a bed in a shop window. He made a great show to the audience about a woman in the bed, a wax dummy. Before the days of X films he would hold the attention by doing a kind of strip tease. Then he would get into bed and with a great show of modesty, would climb out and pull the shop blind until the next performance.

Then he would stand in High Street, looking intently at the sky until he had people looking with him, until the first mug would ask what he was looking at, to which he would reply, "I think it's going to rain."

THE MUSIC MEN

HUBBLE BUBBLE - he wore old down at heel boots and tatty clothes and he had large bumps all over his head. He played an accordion and would start a tune at the top of the street and if he still had not completed it by the time he reached the bottom, he would just stop playing, strap up the accordion and walk away. I don't think it made much difference as no-one seemed to know what he was playing anyway.

The Hippodrome,

EXETER.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3rd, 1915.

Entertainment

in aid of the funds for providing Xmas Presents for Wounded Soldiers in the Exeter V.A. Hospitals.

Arranged by Miss J. TURNER.

I can remember my father on a Saturday lunch time telling him to stand on the step and play until he told him to stop. This used to annoy my mother who would go out and give him a penny to go away. Musically it must have been worth a lot more to shut him up; maybe he was wiser than we knew.

He used to come around the streets, playing this accordion. He used to play outside the shop where I was learning the trade of tailoress, in Barnfield Street; it isn't there now. I remember our boss used to throw him out a penny and once he threw a half a crown out of the window and Hubble Bubble was down that street so quick .... You see he had his own customers where he went. He'd come to stand outside our shop, but he wouldn't go to the other shops in the street.

Then there were the street singers. There was one particular young man about the time of Arthur Tracey, the Street Singer, who was playing the Music Halls. This young man used to go around the streets earning a living. It must have been the time of the depression when many groups moved around cities looking for work and sang in the streets for food. This chap was always sure of 3d from one of my sisters, who thought he sang beautifully. He used to hold up one side of his collar when he sang; I always thought he was hiding his face in embarrassment at his singing.

There was an old man with a one string fiddle who played "A Monastery Garden"; it would take him from the top to the bottom of the street. Of course there were the barrel organs which came around and played selections of music. The man would let the chosen one turn the small wheel to change the tune. If we knew it, we would sing along; if not we'd either stand and listen or if we felt daring we'd dance.

ASHBUCKET LIL OR BLACK FLOR

This was a little lady, small with a mass of black hair, all curls. She used to call at the door with a big basket on her arm containing geraniums of different colours. If you answered the door, she'd say "Ask your mother if she has any old clothes." My mother would then scrabble around and collect some rags and bargain for a plant. All this was done on the door-step with the rest of the street's kids gathered to see what we got.

We were rather cruel; we'd follow her up and down the street calling, "Ashbucket Lil" and she'd chase us and say "I'll tell your mother of you, cheeky little beggars." But it always seemed to be in good humour.

She worked very hard for her small return; the clothes she collected she sorted and then sold off the best; the rest went to the rag and bone man. The clothes in our house were always handed down from one to another so there could not have been much wear left in them by the time she got them; maybe she only got rags from our street.

THE BICYCLE MEN

Smutty Harris, who lived in Summerland Street, used to hire our bicycles for 3d a day. We'd hire one as a gang and teach each other to ride. This meant running along beside the lucky one holding them up till they learnt to balance. If they were hogging the rides or taking too long, you just let them fall off. When we learnt to ride we would hire bikes from Smutty and ride to the Warren for the day. We'd arrive home exhausted and Smutty would examine the bike for damage.

When my husband was working up the Devon General he'd finish work at one o'clock and we'd have a bite to eat and then put the boy on the seat on the bar of the bicycle and cycle down the Warren and stay all day. In those days we had a summer. I used to get a bicycle from Davies; it was fixed gear and it used to be so much an hour. My husband taught several round here to ride the bicycle. He'd start them at the top of the hill and let them run down and if they hadn't fallen off at the bottom, they could ride!

I always remember - this was when I was a girl - I was riding along Alphington Street and I turned into Queen's Road and I ran under the head of a horse. How I missed him I dunno. I don't know what happened to the horse; I didn't wait to see.

JOE SPETTIGUE

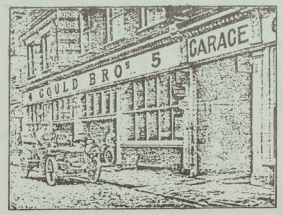
We would go to Joe Spettigue's and hire a bicycle- 1p an hour, solid tyres and fixed gear. The boys would go out and pick blackberries and sell them to get a few coppers to spend.

He lived with his Mum in a poky little shop in Paris Street. He had a dark gypsy face and very black hair; he'd tell us tales of how he used to ride long distance races. His clothes always looked the same; I can never remember Joe in clean overalls. His shop was the same - the floor at least two inches thick in grease. But on Saturdays Joe was clean and very smart as a football referee of high standing.

The shop was stacked to the ceiling with spare parts for bikes and Joe wold always give the little ones ball bearings in the marble season; these were of great value.

When we were fortunate enough to get a bike or even parts of one, there was always someone who had spares and tools to put together something that you could ride. So poor Joe did not make any money out of us until we became workers and could afford to pay for repairs. He did however teach us how to change a wheel and mend punctures, even to put in new spokes; but never how to tighten them so that when we did put in new spokes they either punctured the tube or bent and twisted and this gave a very peculiar shape to the wheel.

GOULD BROS., LTD. The Motor Agents



Appointed Official Repairers to the Royal Automobile Club of G.B. & I. and the Foreign Affiliated Clubs.

Repairs by Certificated Engineers only.

Cars for Hire.

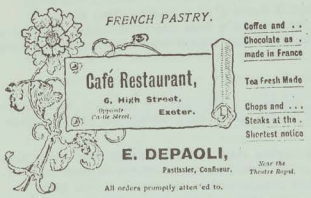
WORKS: 4 & 5, Southernhay.
GARAGE: Adjoining New London Hotel.
SHOWROOMS: Corner of London Inn Sqr.

EXETER.

Telephone 354. Night Telephone 368.
Telegrams: "Gould, Bros., Exeter."

THE ICE CREAM MEN

The most popular were Casalucci and Morelli. John Casalucci, Old Man Casalucci, came from St. Thomas and he had a little pony and trap before he was mechanised. The icecream was a rich gold yellow and cost a penny for a cone or wafer; the wealthy could have a cone with coloured sweet topping for twopence. Casalucci was a very friendly man and always took time to talk to kids. If we had any change to come he used to give it us in Italian - course we didn't know a bit what he was saying. Mind we couldn't always afford that penny, but he'd even give ices to the ones who had no money.



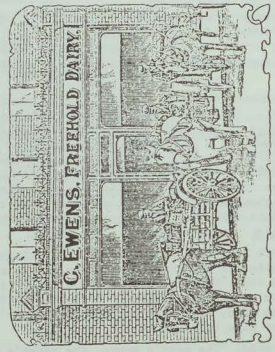
Morelli lived in Summerland Street and had an icecream parlour there, right up to the outbreak of war, when the poor old chap was interned as an alien. The locals were very upset about it; he was a friend to everyone. He ran what the Americans call a soda fountain; you could buy icecreams to take out, sweets and soft drinks. He had white ironwork tables and seats in the store. We used to meet and have an ice or if it were payday an icecream soda; just lemonade with an ice in, but tasting like champagne to us. It was also a place to meet the boys; many romances bloomed in Fungo Morelli's parlour.

THE TURNIP PICKERS

There were ladies who lived in Union Street, a small terrace off Cheeke Street, who went into the fields in Topsham Road, and picked turnips and cut the tops off. They were allowed to keep the green tops as payment which they then sold at a penny an apronful. The apron was a sacking, waist apron with one corner pinned to the waist; they filled this with the greens as they cut them off the turnips. After a hard morning's work in the field they would have an old wheelbarrow, a box on two wheels, loaded with greens. Then they'd call at the houses on their way home and sell the greens. I understand you could get a bathful for 3d; not a bath as we know now, but a galvanised one that always hung on the back door. The turnip pickers were always very distinctive as they wore men's boots and overcoats.

WHERE THE HOUSEKEEPING WENT .....

BREAKFAST: round of bread and jam
mug of tea
WINTER SPECIAL: "Quaker Oats" left to soak overnight in iron saucepan.



DINNER:

STEW stew or roast or pie or pea soup
the large iron saucepan had 3 pennyworth of pieces of turnips, carrots, beans, and "doughboys"; sometimes beef, sometimes rabbit.

PIE beef or rabbit, boiled spuds and greens, usually turnip tops
These were brought to the door by Mrs. Howard; she would spend a couple of days pulling the farmer's turnips and he would give her the greens instead of money

TEA:

bread and jam
cake - usually the seedy type, cheaper than currants.

SUPPER:

No supper for the children, only for father and sometimes mother, money permitting.

FISH	one pennyworth
CHIPS	halfpennyworth
PEAS	halfpennyworth
GRIBBLES	free

G. EWENS,
Dairyman & Fruit Grower,
SIDNEY ROAD, ST. THOMAS,
EXETER.
PURE CLOTTED CREAM.
FRESH BUTTER AND EGGS DAILY.

We ate what Mum could afford. I didn't go hungry; Mum was good on that. My Dad didn't earn much money, round about two pound a week; he used to give Mum one pound to feed us and keep a pound in his pocket.

Saturdays I used to go up Hardings in Alphington Street and get a half quarter tin or quartine of dough and Mum used to make her own dough cake. I can see her now, putting in the lard and the sugar. Then she'd write her name on it. I used to swear really about Saturdays. I had to go out and fetch the dough, bring it home in the proper bread tins; then Mum used to make it and I'd have to take it back again with the name on top; about six o'clock evenings I'd go out again and fetch it, all cooked. That was something that was really delicious - it was really the only cake we had.

Midday we always had a cooked dinner; quite often rabbit, but Sundays we used to have a roast dinner. Mum always used to put the potatoes in with the meat and across the top a bolster case which was suet pudding; it was all baked in the same dish, at that time in the little old black gas cooker.

Mum used to go up town Saturdays and used to get 3 or 4 bananas for a penny and that used to be our Sunday morning's breakfast before we went to Sunday School. Of course Dad always had either egg or torag, as we called it - in other words salt fish. Mum used to fry it with 3 or 4 rashers of fat bacon. Course the man of the house always had to be looked after. Being the youngest I used to get around him and I used to get mouthfuls of torag.

An egg was an absolute delicacy for us in those days. When I was ill with flu during the war (we had a bad epidemic during the first war; we lost a lot of people around us) and I was in bed; I was 8 at the time, my Mum said to me, "What would you like?" and I said, "Oh, please for an egg" and I was so poorly I could only eat one mouthful.

But I could never eat margarine; I used to vomit against it. One day Mum sent me to school with this bread and margarine with sugar on it, thinking I'd like it better that way; but it went in the waste paper basket - I couldn't eat it; it was an impossibility - it was like car grease in those days.

My grandmother was left with 5 children and she was told to kneel and pray for food by the social worker. She said, "How can prayer fill my children's stomachs?" The baby was crying in the high chair, hungry. You see there was no help in those days. She went to a big house and more or less begged for help and they used to give her the remains of the tea; she'd make tea out of the left over tea leaves. There was nothing whatsoever you could do unless you used the Poor Law and you could put your children in, but she wouldn't part with any one of them. Then she got married again and even then she used to go out some distance over Dunsford with him, picking potatoes of a morning to keep things going.

Later she used to go to a Pork Butcher's called Ayres in Alphington Street. The butcher looked exactly like the pig himself; he was a dear old chap. He'd show her a piece of meat and say, "There you are, a nice piece of meat." And she said, "Let me have a look at the other side." He said, "Why? What's the matter with it?" "Look," she said, "the meat's yours, the money's mine, and I'll have a look at the other side before I buy."

That has always stuck in my mind: "The meat's yours, the money's mine."

Here are some Christmas reminiscences and an account of Newtown before the Second World War. I'm sure Stan Pope's account will stir memories; if so, come along to a "People Talking" evening in January, where, over a cup of tea, you can share your memories and tell us what we've left out. Watch the Newsletter and local paper for further details.

Meanwhile, a Happy Christmas!

Jenny Lloyd,
52, Belmont Road,
Exeter.

CONTRIBUTORS: Mrs. Balkwill; Mrs. Dolman; Mrs. Hyde; Mr. Pope.

Telephone 38. —THE— Telegrams—"Stores, Exeter."

Devon & Somerset Stores

(Opposite Bedford Circus.) EXETER.

EXETER BRANCH.

DEPARTMENTS.

Grocery. Wines and Spirits.	Tobaccos and Cigars.
Provisions.	Glass and China.
Medicines and Perfumery.	Electro Plate.
Stationery and Fancy Goods	Tennis Shoes.
Ironmongery and Household Furnishing.	Gamba Ballet Shoes.
Brushes and Mats.	Bags and Trunks.
	Athletic Goods.

And 10,000 Articles of every-day use & consumption.

UTMOST VALUE FOR READY MONEY.

ZUM XMAS'S US 'AVE KNOWD

I 'spect by now you 'ave all 'eard about the liddle maid who puts this yer magazine together. 'Er bin axing us if us could remimber Xmas. While zum of us could tell a fair ole tale, I doant think sum 'ow 'er would print they there sort of tales. Howsomeever, praps us can rake up summit for the maid a bit respekable like.

I could tell 'er 'bout the ole man's sock 'anging on the bade rail, bulging and lumpy; each 'ad our name on en; funny 'ow it was we allus 'ung 'um on the mantlepiece Xmas Eve and there 'twas next morning 'anging on the bade rail. Reckon 'e must 'ave bin dade drunk by the end of the night ifen 'e drunk all them there jugs of cider us left on the kitchen table for 'en. Anyway on top of the sock us 'ud find the "big" present, maybe a box of bricks or a liddle doll, made of rag, very soft and cuddly they was; and oftimes the liddle maids 'ad a new white starched apron or a skipping rope; all lovely white rope and a red and white and blue 'andle. Then us 'ud dig down for a few sweets, a few nuts, and the big orange in the toe of the sock. This was 'bout the only time us 'ud 'ave an orange.

I spose I was luckier than some as most of the maids in our family was out to work, (us all was when us got to 14) and they 'ud buy the liddle ones a present, like a colouring book with crayons or a slate with coloured chalks - diden 'alf make a mess, they did.

A NONNY MOUSE

Xmas us was allowed in the "Front Room"; it 'ud take all day jest to warm up as us wadden allowed in there all yer. It 'ad a big leather sofa with curved 'ead rest that us used to slide on until our mother came in and clipped our earoles - even tho' 'twas Xmas us 'ad to be'ave. In our house we allus 'ad plenty of grub and roaring fires at Xmas.

Cors this 'ad started weeks back when mother made the puddens. What a time 'twas - first us 'ud sit round the big ole kitchen table and on a newspaper with a basin of water us 'ad to take all them blessed pips out of the rasens; not allowed to eat any or there wouden 'ave bin 'nough for puddens. Well, mother 'ud get the big wash basin with the blue flowers on en; you know the ones I means; they allus had jugs to match. She'ud get 'em down from baderoom to mix the puddens in. First us 'ad to get a jug of dark brown beer from the pub, then the butcher's suet 'ad to be chopped. 'Twas all put in the gurt basin, then us all 'ad a stir; everybody 'ad a go because you 'ad to wish as well. Us coudeen tell what us 'ad wished or it woudden 'ave come to us. Then the pudden basins were greased and the 'ole sticky mess put in; then they was tied down, covered with ole pillow cases or even the ole man's shirt. Meanwhile us kids 'ad lit the ole copper inside. 'Twere a brick square with an iron biler inside and a chimney in corner; under there was one of they dratted liddle ole fires, nasty liddle beggars they was; they 'ud go out if you didden watch 'en. Anyway 'e was only used once a week for washday, once a week for bathnight and Xmas for puddens. So when water was biling, us put the puddens in the biler standing on wood and they 'ud bile for 'ours. Cors we'd put in the silver threepenny bits; one for everybody, before they was tied.

Then there was the trimmings for the rooms; us made 'um out of paper, colour strips they was. First us 'ad to make the paste with flour and water - 'twas a right ole mess. Then us 'ud join 'em all together in loops, yards of 'em 'twas. Well us 'ad to make enough to go 'cross the kitchen - us 'ud be all sat round big kitchen table under the gaslight and zumtimes the gas 'ud get lower and lower, then us 'ad to git a chair and put a penny in the meter. Zumtimes the gas pipes 'ud whistle like a ghost. Mother said it was only air in pipes but us diden really cotton on to that; 'twas a big scary - min' you 'twas nice and cosy in the fire-light - us all making chains and getting covered in watery paste, and chatting like a lot of blimming bees in a 'ive.

THE XMAS OUR CUPS RAN OVER . . . . .

We had two uncles, Fred and dear old Uncle Walter who stayed with us this particular Christmas. The two of them with my father went out to their favourite pub and bought Xmas draw tickets - I suppose as the evening wore on they'd have bought anything. And anyway it gave them an excuse to go drinking again on Christmas Eve; and that was the start.

My brother who lived in Yorkshire always sent us either a turkey or a goose - this was always a bit of a cliff hanging chance in case it did not arrive in time. This year it was a large turkey.

When the men arrived home for dinner Christmas Eve they were loaded with a bottle of port, a bottle of sherry, two boxes of chocolates and a brace of rabbits still in their skins. Mother was thrilled but there was more to come: that night they arrived home looking more like poachers with two more brace of rabbits and a large white fowl with feathers still on; two half bottles of whiskey and bottles of beer, plus my father's first prize (he couldn't even remember buying the tickets) of a 2 lb box of King George V chocolates which had a photograph of the king on the front and red silk tassels to open the trays holding the chocolates.

TRY
"HAZELBURN"
(SUPPLIED TO THE ADMIRALTY)
Finest Scotch Whisky.
For purity and delicacy of flavour it surpasses all other Spirits.
18s. per Gallon.
3s. per Bottle.
The exceptional favour so long accorded to this Whisky is due to its absolute Purity and sustained uniformity of flavour and quality.
J. J. NORMAN,
MOUNT ✣ RADFORD.

When they finally all went to bed Fred and Walt shared our double bed - we were all doubled up in the attic bedroom. In those days the beds had mesh springs resting on iron side bars. Fred was in bed first and Walt went to sit on the edge but in doing so he pushed the mesh spring off the bar and spring plus mattress collapsed with a great roar of laughter from Fred, who had rolled down the slope and was now lying on the floor, still under the bedclothes, with Walt sat on top of him.

My mother and father rushed in to sort them out but there was so much laughing going on that they eventually gave up and left them to it. The next morning when my father took them in their cups of tea, both uncles were sound asleep at a 75 degree angle.

"COR, WONDERFUL!"

I never had a doll; I never had a pram; we had clothes for presents. Mum used to say some Christmas mornings, "Go down and look behind the door." And I'd find a dress. There was a dear old lady lived down the street who used to make me a dress, usually in plaid; whether it was remnants she had left over from other people's things I don't know, but she used to make it up on the cheap. That used to be a Christmas present and we were so pleased, delighted.

We used to hang our stockings up. All we used to have in our stockings was an orange, an apple and a few nuts - maybe a sweet or two, but very seldom. I was lucky being the youngest and I used to have a Tobler Bear; they were round and the bear was printed on the chocolate in the centre and I used to sit in bed with a spoon and scrape it to make it last an awful long time. And you know when I was first married my husband used to give me one till they went out.

We used to make our own Christmas. We used to hang up a stocking, yes - a black stocking. In the bottom used to be a penny and an apple and an orange and anything to fill it up. One toy, one sixpenny Christmas stocking stood out at the top so you thought, "Cor, wonderful." Though really you had nothing.

THE BAND PLAYED

Every Christmas Eve the band of the Salvation Army used to come up and play and the coal merchant used to take them [illegible]. He had a room with sliding doors and he'd open them up and they'd have the whole of the room - he used to give all the band an evening meal, a supper.

SINGING IN THE STREET

On Stepcott Hill, they used to gather together; everybody used to come out and welcome the New Year. Everybody used to sing. And my Mum had a lovely voice and she'd be there singing the New Year in.

THE "AASHEN LUG"

An old lady I knew told me about the ashen log or "aashen lug" her father used to make for Christmas. It must have been a yule log really. First he would get a long ash log, long enough to fit the open hearth fireplace; then he would wire small branches or twigs and so cover the log. It used to burn very brightly right down to fine ash when the children put their chestnuts in to roast.

ONE MAN'S NEWTOWN

Dear Readers,

I have tried to give my personal memories of the place I was born and brought up in: Newtown. Of course the evolution of time created a lot of the changes - also more money being available; but nothing can replace the neighbourly feeling and goodwill that existed during that period.

We were poor but happy.

E.S. POPE.

SCHOOL: headmasters: Smythes and Bryant
teachers: Streetan, Beard, Walky, Mrs. Bryant who kept white mice, and Jimmy Lawrence the cricketer.

PUBS: Axminster - Rising Sun - Clifton Inn ; Globe; Crown and Anchor; Golden Lion; Windsor; Summerland Inn.

LICENSED SHOPS: 1, Portland Street; 1, East John Street, 1, Sandford Street.

BAKERS: Hills; Golsworthy; Hargraves; Spears.

BUTCHERS: Tanners; Eastmonds.

GREEN GROCERS: Sanders G. & L.; Marment; Lewis; Mogford; Chandler; Petrian; Langmead.

DAIRIES: Comins; Hunt; Pratt; Snow; Trott.

NEWSAGENTS: Wooton; Grant.

ICECREAM: Clements; Palfrey; Snow; Serpentelli.

SWEET SHOPS: Sydenham; Wootons; Palfrey; James; Gills; Lewis; Southcott; Shorts.

BOOT REPAIRS: 4 Shops.

CHIMNEY SWEEP: Langdon and Reed.

BARBERS: Shapley; Trouge.

POST OFFICE: Hopping, later Bryne.

UNDERTAKER: F. Mitchell.

FISH & CHIPS: Hutchings; Birds; later Brights.

FISHMONGER: Welland.

COOKED MEATS: Clements; Mogford.

JEWELLERS: Bealy.

CHEMIST: The Triangle Pharmacy.

MIDWIFE: Nurse Rowe.

CABBIES: Webber, Parr Street; Webber J, Albert Street.,

COAL MAN: Budd and Davey.

BUILDER: Bryant.

PLUMBER: Rouse.

GAS, GLOBES & MANTLES: Corner of Lower Albert Street.

HAULIERS, FURNITURE REMOVER ETC.: Langmead.

OIL MAN: Langmead.

BRICKYARD & KILNS: Handcocks, Clifton Hill.

WASHING DAY
IS NOW A
PLEASURE
Instead of a day of hard work, worry, and ruffled tempers, you can now do your washing in a few hours, in a pleasant and easy manner, by using
THE
VOLLMAR
PERFECT
WASHER
It Washes, Rinses, Blues, and Wrings. Turns the work out without previous soaking, soaping or boiling. Will not injure curtains or the finest fabrics.
ITS ACTION—The Clothes are placed between two sets of corrugated rubbing boards, one set moving downwards and the other upwards while the lever is being operated.
PRICES. 65/- and 75/- Wringers extra.
H. NORRINGTON & SON, LTD.,
BONHAY ROAD (Near Bonhay Road), EXETER.

WASH DAYS - HARD DAYS

Nearly every house had a brick built copper and Monday was wash day. Mother would be up at about 6 a.m. to light the copper to boil water. Anything was burnt; wood, briquits, old boots and shoes. Father or sone would get the stool and put the bath, scrubbing board, brush, soap on it. Mother would put on her old sacking apron and start at about 7 a.m.; she'd be washing and hanging out until 4 o'clock on hard days. You'd make do with cold meals that day. Then poor mother had the kids to wash and put to bed; the eldest was usually kept up later to run the errands; the shops closed about 8 or 9 p.m.

REPAIRS AT HOME

Families averaged father, mother, plus 3 to 4 children. The biggest family had 14. Most clothing was passed on to younger children. Shoes cost about 1/11; shirts 9d to 11½d; suits, Norfolk, 5/11; soft sand shoes 6½d.

Father would do most of the repairs to the children's shoes and mother would sit evenings altering the clothes of one child to fit the next. Most people were insured for burial at death, usually 1d a week and that would cover everything, £15 to £20. There would be a horse drawn hearse and cabs and 4 men bearers walked in front wearing top hats.

OWN BAND

We had enough musicians to form our own band in Newtown and any special occasion we would march in fancy dress through all the streets and the people would hand out refreshments in all the streets. On Old Year's Night there would be parties in nearly every house and at the stroke of midnight most were out in the streets to sing "Auld Lang Syne" and drinks were exchanged. Happy New Year was written on pavements - Happy Days.

In Russell Street Mr. Marles had his stables. He had about 35 to 40 horses; cabs; brakes; braughams and flys - these were one horse dog carts. He would let you dung out the stables.

The Globe Inn brewed its own beer and the spent hops were sent to Clifton Hill Allotments.

In Belgrave Road Graftons had their mineral water factory; ginger beers; lemonade and cherryade and bottles which had a marble and rubber bands inside to seal them.

SCHOOL

We started at school at about 4 years of age and stayed there until we left to go to work. Children could leave school at 12 years if their attendances were made up; that was 28 days of absence allowed a year. If mother had a query at home, the schoolmaster was usually the one that gave advice in a note sent by the child. In Paris Street there was a school for backward children.

OUTINGS

Most of the children attended Sunday School and we had a Sunday School outing once a year. We would report to the school about 9 o'clock. The teacher would pin a yellow rosette on our lapel, then we would parade in Clifton Road and then walk to the station in Queen Street and take the train to Exmouth. We would carry our dinner, sandwiches, but had our tea given us in a big marquee by Thorns, the caterers. It used to be a great day; for some kids that was the only trip for the year.

Each public house had a yearly outing and on the day a brake and four in hand (that was 4 horses) would set off with the food and beer for Dawlish or somewhere within about 12 to 14 miles. It would get back about 9 o'clock and we kids were allowed to stay up to meet them; they would throw out pennies to us - of course most of them were the worse for drink. The food that was left over was given to us. Most Good Friday mornings the pubs would arrange a trip to Haldon and play each other at rounders: another drinking spree. Poor mother was tied to the home and the kids - most days she'd get an hour's natter at the door with the neighbours and perhaps ½ pint of stout at supper time.

If we could afford it we had a gramophone with a great big horn and cylinder records; they played for about ten minutes.

IT TAKES ALL SORTS

Of course we had our doubtful characters. There was Buck Hodge; he had a policeman's uniform and he caused some fun with the children. Then there was Bricky James, who would lead the processions and George Davis - he would dress up with his top hat and suit all painted up and would play the drums or saxaphone for hours on end.

UP TO NO GOOD

And of course the boys and girls had a wicked streak in them as today but it was of a different kind. For example we would tie a piece of string to a door knocker and cross to the door facing and tie it on there. When one door opened and closed it caused a bit of amusement. Then we would make up a packet of any old thing and put it on the pavement for someone to pick up and carry home - we had to imagine what happened then.

ON THE BEAT

The policeman walked his beat in those days and we lived next door to a pub. There were a couple of loose bricks in the parting wall so a bottle of beer was passed through and the policeman would come in our house to drink it.

HOT CROSS BUNS

Good Friday we boys would go to the baker's very early in the morning and go round the streets selling hot cross buns, a basket on each arm. We called out, "One a penny, two a penny, all hot buns."

PIGEON RACING

My father with a lot of other men kept pigeons and would enter them in races and about the time they were due home I would have to stand by. Father would take a ring off the pigeon's leg, push it in the clock; it would then stop, showing the time the bird arrived home. I had to run to the Honiton Inn, Paris Street, with the clock.

GOAT'S MILK

I remember a Mr. Holmes - he was a ganger on the railway and he kept some nanny goats on the embankment and he would give us kids a cup of goat's milk on his way home - we thought it was lovely.

THE FIRST AEROPLANE

Around about 1918 to 1920 I remember my father taking me to Whipton early one morning to see the first aeroplane to ever land at Exeter - it was an open cockpit bi-plane. I think the pilot was called Vedrenes, a Frenchman.

THE BLITZ

Newtown suffered awful damage during the blitz. We were hemmed in with fire: St. Sidwell, Paris Street, Belmont Road, Albert Street, East John Street, Summerland Street and Parr Street were the worst hit. It seemed as if they tried to burn rather than bomb us out.

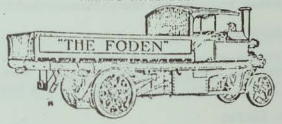
I had the misfortune to lose my house and home during the action with the incendiary bombs and was evacuated to Silverton. I remember Harry Grace going from house to house putting out the fire bombs and rescuing people. I also recall the daylight raid; it was a Monday between 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock. I was security man on the gate entering the gas works. I saw the three planes come up the canal and they opened out like the Prince of Wales' feathers; one went straight on; one went and bombed Holloway Street and Paris Street and the other went around St. Thomas. They did a lot of damage.

G. H. GERMAN & Co.

ROAD - - - -
TRANSPORT -
CONTRACTORS.

STEAM MOTOR LORRIES
ALWAYS AVAILABLE.

TELEPHONE No. 314.



ALL ESTIMATES FREE.

LOADS TAKEN FROM 2 TO 10 TONS.
DISTANCE NO OBJECT.
PERSONAL SUPERVISION GIVEN.

Private Residence:
39, CHURCH ROAD, ST. THOMAS, EXETER.
Call or Write to the Office: Queen's Road, St. Thomas,
EXETER.

AVAILABLE NOW:

VOLUME 5	Carnivals	12p
VOLUME 6	Working Childhoods in Waterbeer and Preston Streets	12p
VOLUME 7	Sidwell Street	25p
VOLUME 8	Bartholomew Street	30p

FROM:

CASTLES BOOKSHOP GANDY STREET EXETER

DEVON LIBRARY WSL SERVICES

THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

PEOPLE TALKING

VOLUME FOUR

MARCH 1976

12 pence

We have a new format to "People Talking"; not to be awkward but to make printing easier. I hope readers will understand our increase in price; People Talking has increased in size too.

This issue covers Fore Street and the West Quarter - memories of people who lived, or worked or shopped there. These are personal accounts and therefore incomplete. There's lots more to be said; we don't research, we listen and talk. We hope to get you talking and listening.

We'd like to thank Mr. Sercombe and the West Country Studies Library for their help in finding and providing material for our illustrator to work from.

As a future project we'd like to collect some old Exeter recipes and publish them in "People Talking". We have already collected some but have no room for them in this issue. If there's a lot of interest we could publish a recipe book. So come along to our "People Talking" Evenings at Newtown School and bring your recipes and memories of Exeter Fairs and Carnivals - the subject of our next issue in June.

Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road
Exeter

CONTRIBUTORS: Mrs. V. Coles ; Mrs. E. Davey ;
Mrs. F. Dolman ; Mr. & Mrs. C. Hayler;
Mr. R. Heale ; Miss B. Northacombe ;
Mr. E. E. Steer.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Paula Youens

FREE HATS

There was Pinnegar's, the drapers next to the Mint Chapel, a very big drapers. Occasionally, they put a large cardboard box of hats outside on the pavement with a big notice, saying, "Please take one." After that Ackroyds joined them and it became Pinnegar and Ackroyd's.

EVERYTHING DELIVERED

A boy who could be kept at school till he was 14 was very fortunate. If he left school at 12, probably he had to get himself a job somewhere. There were all sorts of trades but errand boy was a favourite one. A lot of errand boys worked for the traders on Fore Street. There were so many shopkeepers who could afford to have a boy to run, fetch and carry for virtually nothing. Everything was delivered then.

I remember the bicycles with a big basket in the front and sometimes one at the back as well. Then they had an advertisement through the middle.

MARKET STREET

In Market Street they used to have barrows of fruit and vegetables. People used to seek their stuff from these barrow traders; things would be so cheap. There'll never be anything like the Lower Market.

Barrow Men

There was a chap called Howard, I can see his face now: he used to live by tearing about selling newspapers evenings and I think by day he used to work with a barrow in Milk Street or Market Street. And there was another chap called Bishop who made quite a bit of a go with his barrow and worked up quite a flourishing business with a barrow and eventually migrated to a shop.

Always queuing

During the First World War we went to the Lower Market and queued up with hundreds of others for mugs of pea soup. Sometimes the soup was all gone and we went hungry. Then we had to queue for potatoes in the market, at Allen's green-grocery stall. We were only allowed 2lb per family. Sometimes we were too late and had to go back again next day. There was another stall called Lendon's and for 6d we could get a newspaper of scrap bits of bacon. From Stilman's the butcher we could get a whole cow's heart for a bob. This was stuffed and made a beautiful meal for all of us. And I remember the lovely bread made in the little bakers' shops like Preston, White, West and Chanter's.

COOMBE STREET

Some mornings I had to go to the fish market in Coombe Street with a wash bowl for a bob's worth of fish; whiting and cod all sorts. We had a good feed from the fish. The market then moved to the Quay.

Bird Fancier

Going up over Coombe Street on the left hand side was Atkins, a bird fancier where they used to sell canaries. Cocker Atkins used to put a chair in the doorway and watch the people walk by. A lot used to do that and watch the world go by.

FARTHING BREAKFAST

Opposite Atkins used to be a Mission Hall where they served the Farthing Breakfast. This consisted of a little round loaf cut in three slices, margarine on the bottom of one, then jam, then margarine. And you had a mug of cocoa. You could have as much cocoa as you wanted until the supplies ran out. All this cost you a farthing. You used to queue up; the bigger the boy the quicker you got in: survival of the fittest. It always sticks in my mind, we used to sing, "We thank you, O God."

A Farthing of all
coins the least,
Helps turn a fast
into a feast.

The Farthing Breakfast started in Cricklepit Lane, then moved to Exe Island before it was here. There were railings around and you went down some steps into a hall. You could have as much cocoa as you wanted until the supplies ran out. I earned my breakfast money by fetching coal for people in a box barrow. If I was lucky I'd get enough cash to buy a farthing breakfast, ½d Woodbine fag and ½d swede to take to school to eat during the day. You'd always buy Woodbines rather than feed.

THE NAVAL COLLEGE

After breakfast most of the lads there used to go across the school, up Rack Street. The school was affectionately known as the Rack Street Naval College, don't ask me why.

MITCHING IN THE MARKET

The Cattle Market was in Bonhay Road and the butchers bought live cattle which were driven to the Slaughter House in Tudor Street to be killed. There were pens for the cattle and pigs waiting to be slaughtered. When I was a boy I used to mitch from school on Fridays and hang around the market until the auctions were over. Sometimes a farmer would say, "Take this cow and calf to such and such a farm and I'll give you a bob." I walked for miles driving cows for 1/-. Then on Monday I had the stick for not attending school.

FACTORIES ALL AROUND

There were factories and foundries all around. The smell from J. L. Thomas in the morning on the way to school made you retch. Thomas's made soap and candles and fat. Tremletts was the hide and skin tanning and there were thousands of rats running everywhere. Bradbeers was the brush factory; then there was Cockwell, the father and sons who made and repaired farming ploughs. Upright's Flour Mill was burned down about 1920.

In Tudor Street I lived near a big house we called Queen's House; a queen was supposed to have lived there at one time. I think it was Queen Anne but it was before my time.

LODGING HOUSES

You'd go down Frog Street and that'd lead you into Exe Island where there was a lodging house. Most tramps went up Heavitree Workhouse but those that had enough money went into the lodgings for if they went up Heavitree they had to do a morning's work to pay for a night's sleep. See most of those that could beg a bob or two would go down the doss house on Exe Island. They slept on a bench and boiled up their own tea. They used to knock on the door and say, "Can you spare me some tea," And if you said, "Yes," then they'd ask for some sugar to go with it.

At the bottom of Rack Street there was a lodging house, under the name of Atkins and for 4d a night they could have a bed. I was very friendly with the eldest son because his brithday was 4 days prior to mine and I used to go and celebrate his birthday and he used to come up my house for mine.

Cast Iron Jack

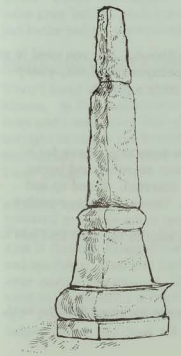
One of the characters there went under the name of Cast Iron Jack because he made a trolly out of old bits and pieces and he used to go to the local tips and pick up bits of scrap metal.

Chuck 'em over Board

Another character in the house was a man called Chuck 'em over Board, simply because he wore a seaman's cap. But he was commonly known as Jack by the people who knew him. The Atkins made him a trusty and he was in charge of all the other tramps to make sure they didn't come in drunk and kept their times.

ONE WAY TO GET A BED

There was another character when I was a diddy going to school; I think he was a tramp, a roadster and his second home was in the police station. His mode of getting in there was smashing the glass windows in the public toilets that were in Milk Street. They'd put him in there for a week then he'd come out and have a couple of jugs of cider and smash another one just to get put back inside. In the end they got so used to him they just took him for granted. It was his way of getting a bed and a meal.



MILK STREET

Most Saturday afternoons you could see an exhibition by a fellow that went under the name of Ginger the Sword Swallower. This took place exactly outside the toilets in Milk Street.

PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

On the corner of Milk Street and Guinea Street was an old fashioned method of water supply, like it was a concrete conduit with metal spouts. Where there wasn't piped water, people used to go to this conduit.

ON THE BEAT

There was a conduit place over in Mary Arches Street as well. I remember one night I was taking a new recruit around on the beat. Fore Street beat was a bit of a

plodder; you're stood on a slope either way. This night - of course, he was green that lad - pretty well wore him out. Coming through Mary Arches Street at about 4 o'clock in the morning, he said, "I must have some water. I've got to drink." And he had a drink in this conduit place.

Rats Screeching

Course another thing you used to hear on night duty: rats screeching in the butchers' shops; scampering about. I heard them many a time, the rats screeching and squealing of a night time. I remember a cat who used to sit by one of those shops down there, by the down pipe, which had an opening into the guttering in the footpath. And this cat would sit for hours by this drainpipe, as he knew the rats used to come down. He'd sit there waiting for them.

TINY NEWCOMBE

There was a fellow down my street - I was born in Preston Street - went under the name of Tiny Newcombe; he was nothing more than about 4 feet 10 inches. He had a little shop where he used to sell hard baked toffee and sweets. Adjoining his shop he had a little yard and every Easter he started a little roundabout going; it had a couple of horses. It was turned by hand, as you would an iron mangle; and for a farthing a time, I think it was, you could have a ride. Many an Easter morning you'd run back and ask mother for another farthing.

A HA'PORTH OF PEPPER

I remember Daddy Pepper - he was not quite in Coombe Street. And you used to go for mam and buy a ha'porth of pepper, ha'porth of salt, pennyworth of tea, penny-worth of sugar. Dear old Daddy Pepper. I suppose he made a profit.

EVERYTHING WAS STARCHED

Isaacs used to be on the corner of Rack Street. I used to have to go there for a ha'porth of starch and a ha'porth of borax. Everything was starched and borax had to be added. I did the same thing myself when I got married. Stand up and scrub all your washing on a board and you had a copper. There was never such a thing as soap powder. You had a piece of soap and you put some ordinary common household soda in and boiled it. I had a copper that was built to the wall that you had to light. But you scrubbed everything that you put in.

BUMPERING

Now my husband came from Staffordshire and when we were married first he said, "I'll help to do your bumpering?"
I said "Do me what?"

He said, "Your bumpering."
"What do you mean, yer bumpering?"
Well, when I went to his home I saw what he meant. They've got a thing with two handles and like a big dustbin thing and it's filled right up with boiling water and chopped soap and you had to go around with this thing and bumper all the washing. And then they used to turn the washing over and bumper it all again. I said, "I see what you means about bumpering." "Yes", he said, "till I found out that you scrubs everything." It was ruddy hard work either way.

THE BATH AND WASH HOUSE

In King Street was the Bath and Wash house with stone steps leading up to it. It was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday for washing clothes. Women took the dirty wash up in zinc baths and took Buster Brown's soap and washing soda. There were scrubbing slats and boards but no mangles. Clothes were rung by hand and taken home still wet in the baths. All you got was hot water which was heated by boilers in the basement, the use of scrubbing boards and of course somewhere to do the washing. It was also a place to catch up with the news.

Bath night

Friday and Saturday was Bath Night for the men and boys. You'd take soap and towel. There two classes; the nobs paid 2d to use the posh baths. All the baths were grey but the posh ones were zinc and the cheap ones iron. The men of course had baths before the weekend ritual drinking spree.

UNDER THE HORSE'S HEAD

When I lived on Stepcote Hill I used to go out in the gutter and follow the paving stones. In Smythern Street at the pub on the corner they used to have a horse and dray and I was doing this all up through to go to the market for mother and walked straight in under the horse's head; I'll never forget looking up seeing myself under that horse, never. But I wouldn't dare tell my mother; she's tell me to look where I was going.

STREET GAMES

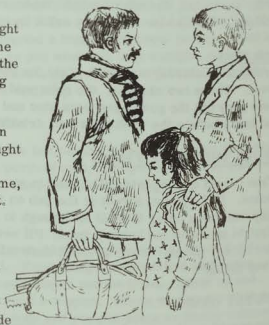
Our games used to be, have a top covered all in coloured paper and have whip and spin it through Kings Street, and watch all the colours. Then there was hopscotch and marbles; then you had a hoop - you used to see who could keep it going round your middle the longest, like for slimming. Another game was cigarette cards: we used to put them on a window ledge and blow until you got the cigarette cards stood up. You'd go in underneath and blow and you'd get 'em all balanced along the window ledge. If you get them all up them you'd won the game.

THE STRAPPING

Then I remember my brother - he got an awful buckle strap for it - mischief. It was he and two other boys. They found a dead cat, so they tied it on some string between two houses; one was Mrs. Greenslade's and one was Mrs. Clarke's. Well they were both trying to open their doors together and of course the cat went into Mrs. Greenslade's face. It could have killed her; she collapsed with the shock of this dead cat. And I remember my brother having the biggest strapping. My father never used anything except the strap which he used to strap himself on the telegraph poles with. And if you had that one you knew you had en.

KNOCK AND RUN LIKE BLAZES

Of course there was knock out ginger; that was your game and run like blazes or else. Or else all stand in a group in Fore Street outside a shop and push somebody in amongst the crowd and then run like blazes.



Kit could run quicker than me so he caught me. And a man in working clothes come along with his working bag, and said to the man, "Let 'er go." "She's been ringing my bell; I'm taking her to the police." He said "LET 'ER GO." Well while they two was arguing this man let go and I was gone. Whether they fought over it or whether they didn't I'll never know. But I know where he was taking me, to the police station in Waterbear Street.

WORK

When you came from a large family you had to go to work. If it was a large family the big ones who left school first would go out to work so things were made easier for the parents so the last one or two were able to be put to a trade - parents could afford it then, you see. Before I went to school I did a milk round first; threw that in and did a paper round. But before that I had to go to the farthing breakfast. Then I went right to the end of Magdalen Street, St. Leonards to do a paper round.

THE CHIP SHOP

In the evenings I worked for the first man to open a fish and chip shop in Exeter: Mr. John Preston; he originated from Bristol. I took over from a school friend of mine at the age of 10 until I was 13; this fish and chip shop was in a little street called Guinea Street; opposite one of the biggest butcher's shops in Exeter at the time, run under the name of Stillman's.. This Mr. Preston was a tartar, a task master, I had to work hard. I used to peel the spuds and chip them. You could have a plate of chips and peas for tuppence and a plate of fish and chips for threepence. There were three little cubicles and you could sit six either side so you could have 18; you'd be busy if you had 18. And you had salt and vinegar bottles;· his method of pouring the vinegar on was by slicing a little bit in the cork and putting it back again. Well some of the boys for a bit of fun would take the cork loose when they left so the next person that came in would unsuspectingly pour vinegar on his plate. Mr. Preston would have to pick up a stick and run out of the door chasing them. I started there at half a crown a week and I think I worked my way up to 4/6d. My hours were 6 until half past ten and if anybody came in after that I had to stay behind. Sometimes I'd be too tired to eat my supper - he gave me a supper.

My sister'd be waiting up for me and my younger brother. We lived in a room then that was partitioned off by a curtain. We came out of a room downstairs where my Mum and Dad slept, into a passageway and up some stairs into another room which our bedroom, adjoining another room which someone else lived in. They were rabbit warrens.

The boots or sometimes clogs belonged to everybody in the family; whoever wanted to wear them just took them. Everything we had belonged to all the family.

FREE MEAT

Saturday nights when I was at Preston's fish and chip shop, the people of the quarter used to gather outside Stilman's and Mr. Stilman would get one or two of his butchers to throw parcels of meat out to us and it'd be one mad scramble: mainly sausage meat and sausages. In those days there were no fridges so it couldn't be kept back. He was a gentleman, a notability, Mr. Stilman was. The poor round our way could thank him for a lot: they were sure of one meal a week providing they weren't killed in the crush. You had your greedy ones who weren't satisfied and had 4 or 5 members of one family all going up.

FIGHTING

There were fights every day and night. There were women who fought like men. You would fight anybody, women, men and policemen. They were taken away in a black Maria still fighting the policemen.

Saturday nights after the pubs turned out, by God you ought to see them fighting; they'd stand and fight anyone. All the police gathered round the church, St. Mary's Church. If they didn't finish it off by midnight they'd say, "Right, see you six o'clock tomorrow morning." And they were there to finish off the fight. We used to go up in my parents' bedroom and watch down over the hill; but if my mother and father had known we was watching them fight . . . . .

TOO SHAKY TO SHAVE

The wives would get out the suit on a Saturday night from Tommy Linscott's in time for their husbands to go down the pub. There was a barber's shop where they would do nothing but shaves on a Sunday morning; obviously after a night out their hands were too shaky to shave themselves. The barber used to have queue outside and a shop full. And two lather boys used to be working over time, lathering up while he was shaving. He used a cut throat razor which was sharpened after and during shaves on a leather strap.

DRINKING TROUBLE

I remember the first man I ever handcuffed; I went into King Street on Fore Street and he came out of a court at the beginning of Stepcote Hill and somebody said, "You better get in out of it, a policeman's coming." and he said, "I'll bloody well show him." And he came over; course he was drunk see and he started to carry on. I told him to get on out of it and he didn't take any notice. Of course one couldn't afford to be browbeaten in front of those people so I had to turn to: well it was a wrestling match before I got the bracelets on him and carted him up the police station. He had to come to the court next morning and he was fined 5 bob, I think. Most of their trouble started when they got in drink.

What you've got to bear in mind is that the amount of drink that they could take in those days was not so much as they can take these days, you see, cos the drink was so much stronger; 1d a pint (now it's all water and fizz stuff). Course a lot used to drink cider; ooh if you drunk rough cider . . . . . They used to call it lunatics' broth; it would knock you over.

"SUCH A GENTLEMAN . . . . . "

Dad was all right all the week but my god, at weekends . . we used to sit there and wait. And when he used to come in and say, "Good evening," very distinctly, we'd look around and pick up all you could find that he could fire at mother.

TWO FACES

My father like a great many of them around had two faces; one home and one out - always. They used to say, "Oh, your father's such a gentleman." Well . . . we used to have a long kitchen table, with a cloth and my poor sister and the others used to go under there and when he ate kippers he wouldn't eat the skin of the kipper - they used to put their hand up over the table and pinch his skin and eat it underneath the table they were so hungry. Sometimes they'd run home from school and all my mum was able to give them was a round of bread and say, "Run back to school before your father sees."

FOOD FOR FATHER

Dad had silver threepenny bit in his wages and I always used to wait for him to turn round the corner and then run like blazes up to meet him 'cos he always had the silver threepenny bit for me. But mother didn't get off so well. She had so much money and the rest had to be kept for father to go up the pub. But his food had to be there! All the time his food. There was the time he stopped throwing his food on a Friday night up behind the fireplace, if he was in the mood when he came home from the pub. So this day my mother waited for him to go to bed. She takes the steak down, goes to the cold water tap out the back, which was shared, and she washed it. Next day she cooked fresh onions, mixed fresh gravy with the steak. He said, "That was gorgeous, Loo."
"I'm glad of that," she said, "because it's what I picked down from the fireplace last night. It's saved me buying today, hasn't it?" I thought, "Oh god help my mother," when she told him what she's done but he was really amused to think that she had the audacity to take this steak from the fire grate. And he never dun it no more; he never threw it again.

But we never really came into father's life, you know. I don't think he cared less whether we had anything to ruddy eat or whether we didn't, just so long as 'e was looked after.

NO HELP, NO CASH

It was a disgrace, being brought up on Stepcote Hill, from the West Quarter and yet there's one thing'll I say and always will say: everyone who was to come from there was never afraid to work. But you got no help, no cash.

IF IT WAS THERE, YOU PAWNED IT

What my father didn't know was that my mother used to wash his pants, vest and his shirt ready for me 12 o'clock Mondays to run up Tommy Linscott's and put his clothes in pawn. My father never knew his underclothes was in pawn. And my poor brother's suit was always in pawn. He worked away on the G.P.O. and he came home weekends and he knew his suit had come from pawn. The suit was there; mother pawned it and that was that.

THE PAWN SHOP PRAM

Everything had to be pressed and clean all ready to go back to the pawn shop Mondays, in the pram with your name on. Someone had an old pram and they used to come round and pick up all the pawn shop parcels and take them to the pawn shop. It used to call at every house. "Any pawn?" Didn't take nothing for it, only what the pawn shop took.

THEY SERVED A BIG NEED

Tommy Linscott, Mr. Bannister and Jo Brooking: they used to take three ha'pence when you put it in and three ha'pence when you took it out; that was threepence. So they made their money; they didn't give you nothing. You paid extra for it to be put on hangers so it wouldn't get creased. I used to have a new pair of shoes and my sister used to say, "Don't walk about too much or they'll knock yer down a penny." So you didn't walk very far. I used to say, "Oh, I can't walk a long way," so they wouldn't knock too much money off.

ANYTHING BUT BORROWING

My dear old mother used to go in for a £2.10 draw and she'd get halfway through and she used to have to change it for 30 bob. I could go across the road and I could say to the bloke over there, "You blooming well wouldn't be over here if it wadden for the likes of my mother and more like her." So when we got married my sisters and I kept to the pawn shop; anything but borrowing; if you borrowed a pound you had to pay two back. We used to take a pair of sheets anything. I took me wedding ring, anything so as we wouldn't ask nobody to lend. And so as nobody would know you was going to the Pawn shop, daft really, I used to go all through the Cathedral, down that lane and go in the back way and walk all the way back again out into High Street. You felt so ashamed walking down South Street because 9 times out of 10 people knew you was going to the Pawn Shop. But our parents couldn't have cared less; if they had to pawn it, pawn it they did.

THE POOR LAW

Now my dad retired from the Post Office when he was 65 cos he couldn't climb up the poles anymore. His pension was 10/- a week so he goes to the Poor Law see what help he could get. They gave him some help alright: Workhouse, 3 days a week, bumpering. A great big bumper that you'd bumper all the ward floors with; they've got machines now, but it was bumpered by hand. For which he earned 15/-, from half past seven in the mornings to five o'clock: five shilings was allocated to him and 10/- was groceries and only groceries.

IF YOUR FACE FITTED . . . . .

I adopted a daughter and when I went to the Poor Law they called my name and said,
"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"
"Nothing from you, but I brought you something," I said.
"You brought me something?"
"Yes," I said, "It's outside, in a pram."
"I'll give you 8 bob a week to take it."
"Oh, no thank you."

"Then you'll have to walk to the workhouse." Well I walked to the gates and I walked home again, the baby still in the pram. Now my friend walked up there and he refused her any help for her family of children so she walked back to the police station and the sargeant on duty phoned up. He said, "Now you walk back and there'll be some money for you." So she had to walk all back, from Waterbear Street to Sidwell Street with a family of children; she had to push the pram and the other poor little things had to run beside her. And he had the audacity to ask her how she dare go to the police station because he wouldn't give her no help. Well what was she to do? It depended if your face fitted, I suppose. When they sent an officer to you if you had anything such as a vase of flowers they wanted to know where you got the money from to buy them; you weren't allowed a gramaphone and if you had a piano you were doing well. You were really destitute if you applied to the Poor Law.

It was said that all the rogues lived in the West Quarter and they were right. We were born rough and lived bloody rough and will always be now.

And when it was eventually cleared it sort of became a ghost town.

DEVON LIBRARY SERVICES

THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

DEVON LIBRARY SERVICES WSL

People Talking

VOLUME FIVE

JUNE 1976

12 pence

24 MAY 19

People Talking

is now a year old and we start the second year with Fairs, the Horse Parade and Carnivals; a suitable theme to coincide with Exeter's 1976 Festival.

"People Talking" certainly gets you talking, and many of you have contacted us with your stories and memories. Each issue leads to a complicated network of people who know someone who remembers something. Thanks to all the people who have been the go-betweens arranging interviews. We're grateful too, for help with material for the illustrations: thanks to Mrs F Hoer and the Editor of the Express and Echo for lending us photographs.

We've included two old recipes at the end and would be interested in any other old recipes.

Our next issue will be out in September. Keep contacting us!

Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road
Exeter

CONTRIBUTORS

Mrs M Balkwill
Mrs W Carmack
Mrs F M Coles
Mrs V Coles
Mrs E Davey
Mr C Hayler
Mrs F Hoer
Mr F G Lendon
Mr E S Pope
Mr T Worthington

ILLUSTRATIONS: Paula Youens

RACK STREET NAVAL COLLEGE or Central Middle School is closing July 1976 and moving to new buildings. The school is putting together a magazine to mark the closure and would like to hear from any old pupil or grandparents who lived in the local area; the school is interested in any memories, happy or distressing, any unusual points of interest about the school or the area. If you can help, would you contact the Headmaster, Mr B Maslin, at Central Middle School.

The Easter Fair was always held on the site known as Haven Banks. It was a time of great excitement. We used to be taken on Easter Monday.

DRAGON RIDE

The fairgr ound was run by Anderson and Rowland. To me as a child it seemed huge. The biggest attraction was the Dragon Ride; it was beautiful, large dragons with gaping jaws painted in glorious gold, red, yellow and blue. You sat on red velvet seats and went around at great speed. The main steps lead up to a tremendous organ, big golden pipes with a model figure of a conductor and drums and cymbals, all clashing out with moving figures. Much of our time was spent just watching, and listening to the organ. The steam hooter would blast off to signal the start and finish of each ride.

THE CAKEWALK

Our next stop was the Cakewalk which was a moving platform with brass rails to hold on to. You had to walk up one side and back the other. The difficult part was getting off at the end. Then there was the big horse carousel with magnificent steeds on brass rails which we clutched tight as we went around, and up and down. All the horses had names printed on them; we would look around until we found a name we liked.

SHINING MONSTERS

The big steam engines were another big attraction: free to watch. They supplied the power for lights and driving all the equipment. These were shining monsters, bright with paint and again lots of brass work gleaming, with hunge driving wheels and belts.

FOOD STALLS

There were stalls selling Easter fairing, sugar almonds and ginger bread: a real Easter treat. Another stall would sell windmills, tickling feather sticks and little celluloid dolls done up in paper carnival clothes. Among the other food stalls was the hot chestnut man and of course a hand cart selling ships in a newspaper cone. We always soaked the chips with vinegar which then ran out of the bottom of the cone.

SIDE SHOWS

The side shows had a wide variety of attractions: there was a boxing booth with boxers who would challenge anyone from the crowd and the freak shows. My sister remembers one which was billed as 'The Crab Woman'; inside was a woman with her head poked through a crab shaped cushion.

The Flea Circus always drew a crowd just to see fleas hopping about in a ring covered in sawdust set up on trestles. The fleas had to pull a little cart and one had a paper aeroplane shape on its back; it was called Limberg, after the American flyer. Customers were warned not to steal the fleas and were offered 3d a time for each flea they could produce suitable for training.

FATHERS PROVED THEIR STRENGTH

Fathers all had a go to prove how strong they were by hitting a nob with a large mallet and try to ring the bell at the top of the board. My father and his friends would always have a little competition on this with lots of laughter when the strike only went half way up. Around the sides were the usual rifle ranges and coconut shies. Easter would not have been Easter without a coconut. I don't know if my father was a good shot or if it might have been cheaper for him to have bought one, but it was always carried home in triumph. Should he knock down two with two balls he was more or less told not to knock down anymore. The nuts would be put more firmly into the sawdust sand. The Hoopla stalls had their boxes of chocolates which were too big for the rings to go over and little glass cruet sets and Kewpie dolls which were celluloid and brightly painted.

WALL OF DEATH

In later years of course came the Wall of Death, an arena of high wooden walls on which the men would ride motor cycles, starting at the bottom and gradually reaching the top. The noise and vibration was terrific. They even had motor bikes with sidecars with a woman passenger. It was a dangerous job and many riders have crashed from the wall. This of course drew larger crowds who demanded even more risky stunts. We had our own thrill driving around in the Dodge 'em cars. It was more of a case of bash 'em, as the game turned into a challenge of who could bump most cars.

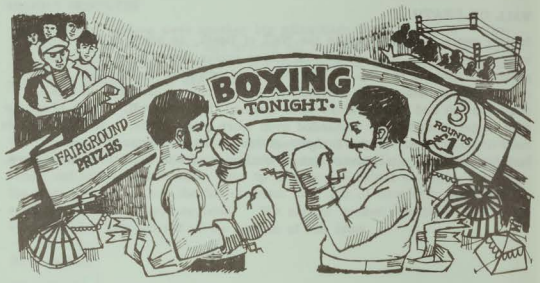
Fairs, fairs, fairs

Fairs were held behind what is now St Thomas Pleasure ground. We used to get into the field from Okehampton Street. There was the Ocean Wave, the Gondolas and the horses all run from steam engines. The man who stoked the engine looked after all the machinery and kept everything going. On the Saturday night after a late closing about 11.00, all the fair people got to work taking everything down and packing it all away and on Sunday they moved out, usually to Taunton and Bridgewater. They had it all worked out and did the same round of places each year.

RIVAL BARRACKS

We had two barracks at that time: the Devonshire Regiment was at the Higher Barracks and the Royal Horse Artillery, known as the R.H.A., were at Topsham Barracks. Most nights when the fair was on, the soldiers used to go there after having a drink and there was always a fight in the fairground between the two lots.

The R.H.A. used to wear riding breeches, tunic and leggings or puttees, hobnail boots with spurs on. They would take off their belts and bandoliers to use in the fights. It was a rough place to be when they got started and anything went: boots, belts, fists or anything they could grab hold of. They were taken away if they got caught by the Redcaps who patrolled the High Street.



FOUL PLAY

When the Boxing Booth was on the fairground there was usually soldiers and sailors or drinking layabouts who would go into the ring to try and last 3 rounds for a quid. But they never won because the referee belonged to the fair and the boxer used to do all sorts of things, like lean on them and commit fouls which the ref wouldn't look at. Freddie Mills started in a Boxing Booth and I remember a big black chap called Owen who used to be around.

PRIZES GALORE

When we were walking out before we were married I used to try my luck with the darts - they were 3 for 3d - and the shooting, well, all the things you could win prizes on. And we had a box filled with dogs, horses, birds, almost every animal you can think of, all made of a sort of chalk and painted over. If it was wet days the field was a sea of mud and it come up over your boots and trousers, but the fair went on just the same.

Newcombe's Yard

There'd be the roundabouts, swinging boats, hoopla and a little toy stall, all in that Preston Street Newcombe's Yard. In that yard every Christmas and Easter time we've been taking in plenty of money. The equipment was my

mother's and father's. Mother and father was sort of an old noted family. If someone wanted to borrow money, they'd run to Mum.

FAIR PEOPLE

Me and my brother Bert, we had a little organ, and 'e used to turn the organ and then I'd turn the roundabouts. If I can remember rightly there was 2 thousand pieces in each horse on the roundabout. They were sort of all patched.

Mother and father used to go round the fairs, you see. I slept underneath the shooting gallery, that was my birthday present. Each time I had a birthday I was given a stall to look after: hoopla stall when I was 10 year old, that was in the yard. I've bin to the grounds and roundabout the fairs with them as well when I got older. But I'm afraid I didn't get much chance: mother had eight children and each time she had a child, I used to have to stay home and see to that, you see.

CONFETTI AND TICKLERS

I used to go down on Exe Bridge and I'd sell a bag of confetti or anything like that. And us used to go to Ryde's and make our long paper brushes; all different colours you used to have the paper, the ticklers. They used to get all the old bits of newspaper. Us used to have to go up and make they up in the attic, and sell them on the street. Of course they was only a penny each then.

If ever I talk to anybody now and they looks at me: "Oh my god, you ain't Maud Newcombe with the roundabouts and the swinging boats?" I says, "Yes." We were really known down there.

Regatta time

The river was also a big attraction at Regatta time: We were taken down to sit on the grass banks opposite the Port Royal or as near as we could get so we could see the boat crews making their last desperate effort after coming around the bend, under the ferry wire, and across the winning line.

THEY RACED ALL DAY

There was always a big entry of crews and racing went on most of the day. We all picknicked on the banks. After a day out we would walk back to

Exe Bridge and catch the tram back to the Depot in Paris Street. We always sat on the open top deck where the seats were slatted wood and the trolley bar rose from the centre to run along the overhead wires; sparks would fly when you crossed the junction at Queen Street and the top of Paris Street.

THE GREASY POLE

There was a slippery pole out over the water, down by the Port Royal. There used to be a ham on the top and if you could climb up the greasy pole it was yours. If you fell off the pole, you fell in the river. This was while the racing was going on and they used to have a fair on Haven Banks at the same time.

ANYTHING, ANYTIME

I've been in there swimming myself, carnival time, jolly good sport. Anybody could qualify for anything, anytime; that's provided it wasn't very obscene or anything, but even then they had their fun.

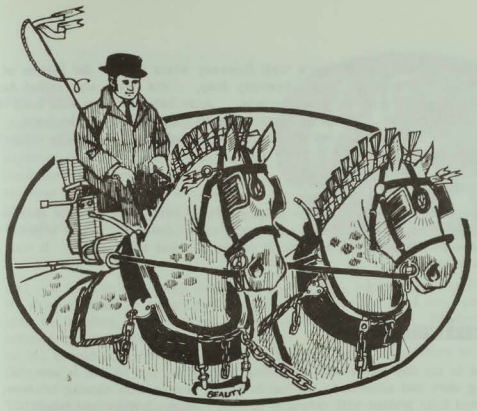
The Horse Parade

Whit Monday there was the Cart-Horse Parade. The starting point was Bury Meadow or Higher Barracks. First in the lead were usually the Mounted Police or a band. Next came the heavy draft horses; the council horses; Claridge timber horses; the railway horses, Great Western and South Western; then the light van horse and cobs, the mill round horses and ponies, followed by any private owners, mostly juveniles who owned.

A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT

The drivers and owners were responsible for decorations and spent hours in grooming. Tails and mains were all traced with coloured ribbons- brasses shining like gold, the hooves all polished and the horses' coats glistening. It was a beautiful sight.

The judging took place before the start and the winners carried their diplomas around with them so that you knew the winners as they passed. There was no such thing as overtime in those days. The drivers were fond of their horses they would almost sleep with them the night before.



ANNUAL EVENT

My brother worked for a coal merchant who had his coal depot in the old railway siding in Queen Street. Every year he entered his horses in the annual parade which was a big day in the city. It was always held on Whit Monday up to the time of the First World War.

HARD SCRUBBING

The day before the parade my brother and his boss would take all day scrubbing the horses down with warm soapy water; then hard brushing to make their coats shine. The hooves were polished and the manes and tails plaited with red, white and blue ribbons. Then the stables were scrubbed out and my brother had to stay in the stables all night to prevent the horses from lying down and getting dirty.

THE BIG DAY

On the big day they were harnessed up to carts which had also been scrubbed and polished. The harness was shining and the brasses had been polished; they look a proper picture. Best suits were worn that day with a bowler hat and he'd carry a long whip with a ribbon bow tied on the handle.

ACTY

My husband worked for St Anne's Well Brewery which was at the bottom of North Street. He drove a large brewery dray. His horse was called Acty and they always entered the horse parade. Acty behaved very well until the bands started to play. Then he would sway to the music as if he were dancing. He also stepped out proudly in the parade as if he really enjoyed the whole thing.

AN HONOUR TO WIN

There were various awards at the judging; trade entries and private entries were judged separately. There were cups and rosettes. It was a great day and of course a celebration at night if any prizes had been worn. It was a big honour to win.

Carnival time

Carnival in my day was really something to look at, not like it is now, all blooming cars and adverts. We had beautiful horses with shining brasses, manes and tails plaited with coloured braids. Some horses had brass ornaments on top of their heads with a bell hung on which rang when the horse walked or shook his head. The carts and horses were hired for the day from firms like the Breweries, Kivels, Whites or Uprights. There were so many firms had horse drawn carts there was plenty to hire from.

ALL FOR FUN

The carnival started from the Falmouth out Buddle Lane and it was judged there. Prizes were given for different carts, like funny or the prettiest, all sorts of classes. It took about half an hour to pass by and hundreds of people were out on the streets enjoying it. When I was a boy I once carried an oil flare and walked in front from the Falmouth all around town and back to the Falmouth. We did it for fun.

PAST THE HOSPITAL

It always passed the R.D.E. Hospital so that the patients could see and I think the collection money went to the hospital. It was a long way to walk. Boards with oil flares were carried by two men; they normally walked beside the carts to light the floats.

THE BEST

Heavitree to my mind was always the best. The torches used to be carried, anything up to 15 on a plank, on their shoulders, and that used to light the tableaux up. And they'd walk each side of the lorries. It was a thing everybody put their heart in.

FUNNY INDIVIDUALS

And you used to see some real funny individuals, such as Tommy Shilton. He used to come in from Clyst St Mary. And as far as I can remember until he finished, I don't think he ever missed a carnival. He dressed himself up like a gentleman, a fox hunter. He used to have this fox sat on his shoulder. Sometimes he was on horse back, sometimes in a pony trap.

YOUR ROOF IS MY HEADACHE

There was Gerry Andrews - he'd carry a house of bricks on his head. And when it was put on his head it was there until the carnival finished. He always liked to get to the front of the procession. He'd carry a banner: "Your roof is my headache".

TILER'S NODDER

He used to be a tiler's nodder; he worked for my uncle. In those days you used to carry the slates on your heads, just put them on your head and go straight up. Sometimes you used to have a rubber quoit in your hat and the tiles would go on top; maybe 24 small tiles. And Gerry used to nod the tiles up on his head. And with this he used to carry this house on his head through the streets of Heavitree. Everyone knew Gerry Andrews. Rain or shine, Gerry used to be there, carrying this little house with bricks painted on; about two foot six square, I suppose - a proper little house. He used to carry it for all the carnivals; get in on the act somewhere.

I met him years later and someone wanted to take a photograph of him up this big ladder and the ladder was whipping in. Well, Gerry got him to take a photograph with all these bricks on his head, and the ladder started to whip and these bricks started to fall around Gerry.

St Thomas Carnival

The parade was led by Mr Elliot, the butcher, riding on his horse. The Cadet Band was led by a Mr Slugget; they rode in a charabanc which was an open topped Leyland coach. One of the highlights was a man dressed as a huntsman riding on a beautiful horse and he always carried this live fox cub round his neck.

A GLORIOUS SIGHT

The fire engines were a glorious sight, bright red, and shining brasswork with the ladders on top; the firemen in dark uniforms with shiny brass button, jack boots and lovely brass helmets- very smart crews they were. At that time the fire brigade was stationed in New North Road below the Theatre Royal. I believe the crews were mainly volunteers.

PEDLARS

There were men who looked like old time pedlars- they carried trays around their necks and sold windmills, confetti and what Ken Dodd now calls tickling sticks.

CROWDED STREETS

Vantage points to watch the Carnival for us were the Triangle, if we were a gang of kids on our own, but if we went with mother and father we were taken to Bedford Circus. There was a large Bank on the corner of Bedford Circus and High Street; the Bank doorway had wide steps leading up to the front door and wide marble window sills. My brother and I were put up on the window sill, which felt 20 foot high, as we were very young. People turned out in their hundreds and lined the routes all the way. It was a big night and the fun continued in Cowick Street and St Thomas into the night. My older sisters were allowed to go down town but had to be home by 9 pm or else!

A real comedienne

Now Mrs Hoer kept the fish and chip shop down Buller Road. She was a character. We always used to have our fish and chips from there. She was a real comedienne, she was, no doubt about it, a glorious character. She'd dress up as characters from the Old Music Halls. She was entertainment in herself.

MRS HOER

When it came round Carnival time, I'd say to my friend in Buller Road, "Now what shall we do this time?" And us would think of something and if we'd decide to do that then we'd work on it. We used to work on it for weeks: We'd dress the lorry in the yard opposite. Beach Brothers in Western Road used to have some lovely lorries. Mr Beach was very good.

MY CONCERT PARTY

And all the people who used to take part with me, doing the floats were my friends: what I used to call my concert party.

OCTOBER TIME

We'd do Exminster, Heavitree and St Thomas. It'd be October - sometimes it'd be very cold. Heavitree and St Thomas were two different carnivals in them days. Heavitree would either do theirs first or we would do ours first. Say for instance I was in St Thomas they may write and say you may like to enter up into Heavitree Carnival and they'd book us in. And Heavitree would come down to us.

THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE

We done Crediton too; we'd have some fun there. There was Simple Simon and once when us was all lined up ready to be judged, he said to me, "Have 'um judged us yet?"
I said, "I don't know."
"And you don't care, do you?"
"No," I said, "we're here for the good of the cause, not for what you can get."
"Oh, I've got to have a prize," he said. "Cos I paid 7/6d for my costume. I reckon you're bloody good, your Before and After Rationing."

BEFORE AND AFTER RATIONING

When we did Before and After Rationing at St. Thomas, that was our first carnival, the judges said, "Would you two walking gals go in next to that wall."

Mrs. Edicott - she was my friend who helped me - said, "My god, what are they going to do?"

I said, "We're going to get shot at dawn. I've got something in my basket here I didn't ought to have."

You ought to have seen us two going across that playground.

Us stood up against the wall and they snapped us. And us was in the front page of the Express and Echo and I laughed and laughed.

We done eight carnivals for that, and got a prize each time. We drew crowds; crowds we drew.

TABLEAUS

I did all tableaus after that first one: we did Gurt and Daisy's Fish and Chip shop; that was about 1946. Then we did Dr Doolittle and the National Health. One of my friends was sitting in the dentist's chair and I was pulling out her teeth, forceps and all. I was pulling out her teeth and she was going, "OOOOH, OOOOH," and she was lifting up her leg higher and higher and you could see these red britches she used to wear.

Then in another carnival I was the Mayor; then there was Lady Godiva going into Coventry.

And then there was Webb's Stores. If you remember when we were rationed the minister was called Webb; well I was Webb, dressed as a butcher. He put on a better sausage and charged 1/4½d a pound for it. I stayed up all one night to make the sausage for the carnival.

And we did Down on Webb's Farm and the things we had; green fowls and the cow. BEWARE THE COW - we made that cow and oh, how we laughed. I was lent the clothes stand and I had to make it. And when I came to his behind I didn't know how to finish it. I used a table for the four legs and stuffed en with pillows and made the tail out of a bit of cord.

THE CORONATION

For the Coronation I was the queen and I made all the costume myself. I used me old nightdress and an old sheet cut in half and dyed; bits of wool; a lace curtain; chocolate paper; wire - ho, all sorts. When I come out to get in my golden coach they didn't need no petrol to pull me around; the kiddies pushed me. And they started singing, "I've got a Loverly Bunch of Coconuts." When I got to the end of the road to get out into Cowick Street, the men said, "Oh, you mustn't sing that going down through the street, you must sing, "Land of Hope and Glory." The police said I could go around Cowick Street - they didn't stop me anything on Coronation Day.

Bread pudding

1 large white loaf
6oz suet
6oz sugar
2 eggs
Currants
mixed spice to taste, about ½ teaspoon.

Cut off the crusts and soak bread for about 10 minutes, then squeeze water out. Put in basin, then add suet, sugar, mixed spice, currants, 2 eggs and bake until nice and brown. Cut next day.

Potato cakes

½lb S.R. flour
10oz cold mashed potato
½ teaspoon salt
2oz oiled butter or marge

Put flour and salt into basin. Add potato and the butter; mix well and bind together with a little milk. Roll out on floured board and cut into rounds, about 3/8 of an inch thick. Bake in oven for 15 to 20 minutes. Some fruit can be added if liked.

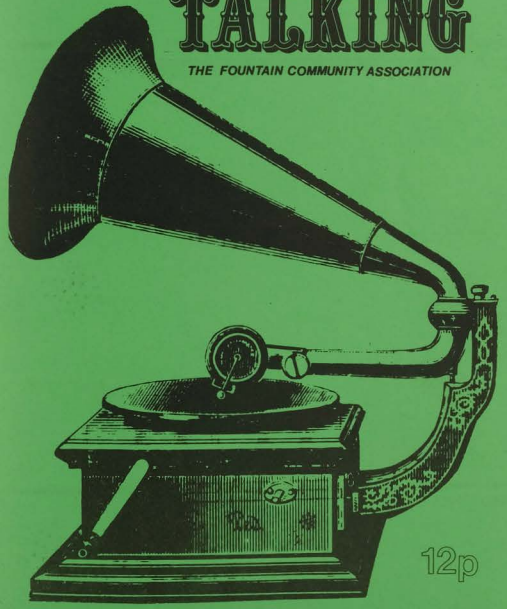
DEVON LIBRARY SERVICES
WSL

DECEMBER 1976

Volume 6

PEOPLE TALKING

THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



12p

4 DEC 1976

PEOPLE TALKING

I promised a September issue and now it's December; apologies to our regular readers. This issue is in two quite separate parts, but they are both about working childhoods.

The first part is one man's recollections of Waterbeer Street and North Street in the late twenties and early thirties. The map shows the shops as he remembers them; readers can fill in the gaps and perhaps walk down Waterbeer Street and North Street now and see how much has been destroyed.

The second part continues the story of the Newcombes of Preston Street; an account of the roundabouts in their yard appeared in Volume Five.

We welcome Clawson Morris as our new illustrator as Paula Youens has left Exeter. We'd like to thank the West Country Studies Library, Exeter Museum and Mrs. Coles for providing material for Clawson to work from.

Jenny Lloyd.

Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road
Exeter

CONTRIBUTORS: Mrs. F.M. Coles, Mr. F.G. Lendon.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Clawson Morris.

North Street & Waterbeer Street about 1925

I USED to live up Waterbeer Street and I used to live in a court called Snells Buildings, which ran parallel with Parliament Street, which is the smallest street in the world.

In Parliament Street itself when I was a schoolboy, ever since I could flick marbles I suppose, I'd spend hours and hours in that lane flicking marbles with my school friends. Not like they do now; you flipped them and they landed wherever you wanted them to, if you were clever enough.

We used to have what we called shiny eggets, ball bearings, silver ball bearings. But we used to abbreviate: "Where's my eggy gone?" "Where's my silver gone?" "Where's my glassy marble gone?" The glassy marble used to come out of the ginger beer bottles which we used to get when I was a boy from the Yacht Beverage in North Street. I smashed many a bottle to get the marble out. The Yacht Beverage is where the Gaumont Cinema is.

Once you got in the Yacht Beverage there was nothing but a mass of glass bottles and marbles everywhere. You'd go in there to get a pennyworth of lemonade and you'd drink it till you bust.

When the bottles were filled the marble would float up to the top. I've got the thing we used to open the bottle with: you'd put that one on top and push it down to release the marble and once that was released it wouldn't come up again until they filled the bottle, washed him out and refilled.

Ginger beer bottle and opener.

YOU HAD TO WORK

My childhood was spent in Waterbeer Street. Mind you I had to work. I worked for a grocery provision merchant down North Street called Wilcox. And that shop is where the typewriter shop Southwoods is now. Now I worked in there, when I finished school for the day; I was 11 year old. My father got me a brown document that I was allowed to work between school hours. You got to have this otherwise it was illegal; they thought perhaps you was having child labour. I used to work there when I came out of school dinner time for half an hour. After school I had to work till 7o'clock. And I walked miles delivering groceries for people better off than my mother and father. I carried a basket about five times the normal size. When I walked along it was that full I was half bent sideways it was so heavy: all up Union Road with it for the princely sum of half a crown a week. And I used to take that home to my mother which I had to - that was orders. What father said then, he said and he meant; there was no arguing about it. Out of the half a crown they used to give me 2d and I used to buy four gob stoppers that used to last me nearly a week.

After I left school I worked for Mr. Wilcox and he gave me a rise of half a crown which was five bob a week. I worked three times as hard then. He used to have a pony and trap, a lovely grey horse, sort of dapple grey like. And every Friday he used to say to me, "Go over and harness the horse, put him in the trap. You're going down the Ice House, down Bonhay Road."

"Yes, sir." You had to say sir to these people.

I'd go over and get the horse and he'd come over and say, "Right then; it's half-four; I want you back at half past five, no later." I used to have to take the horse myself, go down under the iron bridge; you can't now but you could then; down Exe Street and turn into the Old Ice House, the remnants of it are still there now. I used to go in and ask for Mr. Wilcox' brass balls - that was the sort of thing they fed to pigs; they come from a cow, the innards of the cow. And he used to order one of these every week. And I had to take it from the Ice House out to Cowley Road where he had a little small holding, dump it there, bring the horse back; clean the horse, clean the cart and then go out on my deliveries after that.

WATERBEER STREET

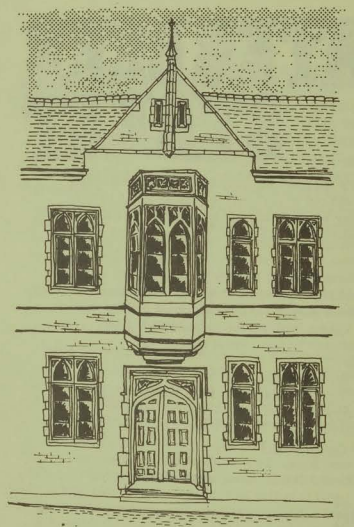
Waterbeer Street was a very busy street, very busy. I can remember the time my elder brother ran out of the court without stopping to think, and ran right under a railway waggon; his leg went right under the wheel - dislocated his leg, naturally. That's the sort of thing you had in those days.

Coming down from North Street was the British Workman; that was a restaurant. Well, you could get anything. My mother and father and several of the neighbours used to send me down there for three penny-worth of gravy and meat. Take a basin, a fair size basin and Mr. Badcock in there, nice character he was, would carve it up.
"What's it for, your mother?"
"No, it's for Mrs. Baker, further up the road."
"Alright." He'd carve off 10, 15 slices of meat and put the gravy in with it. And he'd say, "Hurry up home." If it was for yourself he'd give you more; if he gave Mrs. Baker 15 slices and I told him it was for my mum and dad he'd give me perhaps 20. But if you told 'e a lie, 'e wouldn't give you no more next time. You could eat there; it was no ravishing restaurant, you know. It was clean, clean as a new pin.

NORTH SIDE

The business premises in that street were enormous at that time. A wonderful trade in there. Starting from Goldsmith Street there was the New Market Inn. The landlord at that time was Macfarline. He had a nice daughter there; I was always very sweet on her. That was a good beer shop.

Next door to that was a real old fashioned dairy - a beautiful dairy. Well, I used to go up there early mornings. My mother used to call me at 6o'clock: "Run up the dairy, Fred. Three pennyworth of skimmed cream." That same basin I used to get the meat in, practically three parts full with skimmed cream. It was a real treat that was. You could get scald milk and new milk. Scald milk was without the cream which a lot of families bought as they couldn't afford the cream; and they couldn't afford the scald, a lot of them.



Police Station

Next door to that was the police station. I've seen some characters carried in there. I could name several: there's Daddy Ousley and the one that did all the salmon poaching; I've seen six policemen hold 'e down and then let him get away with it. They used to tie him in a sort of bath chair; they'd tie him in and pull him backwards. Couldn't see where he was going. If he knew he was going to the police station that was it. I've seen some charges going up that police station. And I've also heard boys and men scream through having the birch at the back of the place. I can remember seeing a policeman with a handful of salt which he had just rubbed into a boy's backside.

There was another character used to come along there; they used to call him Bug Whiskers. His other name I never knew. I've seen 'e pick up an ordinary household cat in the street and sling 'n up in the air. And he'd stand there and wait for it, and catch it. I've seen 'e do that three or four times. He didn't like cats, but he didn't want to injure them.

LEATHER AND CHEESE

On the other side of that corner was Hearn's, the leather people. Those people there struck thousands and thousands of sheets of leather. I used to have a new pair of boots once every 10 years. Father knocked the daylights out of them, tapping them, reshoeing them. Sent us up to Hearn's: "Your boots want doing, boy. Right, there's 6d; go and get six pennyworth of leather." Six pennyworth of leather was enough to do my boots and perhaps one of me brother's boots. They were wonderful men in there.

Coming down from there was Lendon's, the cheese factory. My name, but no relation to me. Well, I can remember when I was a boy catching flies by the thousand; thousands of them on his big, red, double doors. You could never get him to give you anything in there. But the cheese in there was beautiful stuff. It doesn't do harm to say it wasn't the cleanest of places but cheeses then seemed to come in a big, thicker wrapped-up skin.

SNELL'S BUILDINGS

Next door to that was Algar's, the Ironmongers. That firm in there was the biggest firm; they had a huge place there. Surprising the iron they got rid of there. Then from there was Garton and King's place. They used to keep the oil in there which was right opposite the court where I lived - Snell's Buildings - ten houses in there, five each side, three storeys high. You had to go in under a little archway, wasn't no wider than a chimney breast, and I could touch it with both hands. You used to go in there and that's where we used to live. When you got in there surprising the amount of room you got. All the boys and girls who lived there were all mates and pals. We were friends for life as you might say. When you came out of there you had to be very careful. As I said just now my brother run under a waggon. Garton and King's stretched from that particular point right down to the British Workman- rather a big place that.

SOUTH SIDE

On the other side of the road we had Munk's of Waterbeer Street which has just finished. Then of course we had the Guildhall where we used to see the prisoners unloading and loading, when they came to the courts. We used to watch 'em. They didn't used to bring 'em in taxis; they'd bring 'em in horse and cabs, covered. From there you had the Turk's Head, another good paying pub. Then Brookings; you'd take something in and redeem it. Then we come to Pulsford's, which used to be the draper's place. At the back of Pulsford's was the servant training centre. Quite a number of girls trained there for service.

Haldon Races

Beyond that used to be Mr Wellington; he used to be a fruit merchant, and I used to go to Haldon with 'e, Haldon Races. I can picture his cart now, horse and cart, one side loaded up with oranges and the other side loaded up with apples. I used to sit up there and go up Haldon to look after the horse while he done all the selling of the fruit. When he sold it he used to get blind drunk; so drunk I had to drive him back; that's what he used to take me for. When he come home his wife used to go wild - murder it was. She used to go at me then, "You shouldn't go. If you hadn't gone, he'd come right home". Course I wanted none of that.

FURNITURE, GLASS AND HATS

The other side of our court was a Mr. Baker, furniture removals. I referred to them just now, sending me down to the British Workman. Then there was Rowe Brothers which stretched from that side of Waterbeer Street to the High Street which is rather a huge place. Actually it's Woolworth's now. I've seen a chap in there unloading glass, great panes of glass as big as a wall. I seen one collapse, the top half fall down, almost cut his arm off. It was a very rare occasion; there was something wrong that particular day.

Then there was a wonderful place there called Edwards hat shop. And you could buy any class of hat in there that you really wanted: straw, toppers, blue, black, any colour you wanted. I've been in there and I've seen as many as three thousand hats in there. That was a wonderful place.

WEST SIDE

Going down North Street from there was Morrish's meat shop. He was a nice character; lovely bit of meat down there. That changed hands several times, the shop. It were a barber shop then it went to a stationery shop, then it went back to a barber shop. Then I've got down as far as Chudley's Pork Butchers. There was a place now. Boys like myself would go in there and ask for two pennyworth of skin and bone. And it was marvellous what our mothers used to make of that skin and bone, marvellous. He always had the skin and bone for the poor people of the district. It used to make such wonderful meals.

Then going on from there was St. Kerrian's Cafe. The old clock up above there I've been up and seen that work many a time. Now there was a finery that never should have been destroyed to my mind. Something out of the ordinary. The clock was in wonderful condition until they started banging it around. If they'd kept it in its natural state it would have been alright now. They say they took the clock down and stored it somewhere. I've never known where it went, but it was a wonderful time piece, everybody around there used to go by it.

Then going on from there was Southwoods, typewriting people. Any manner of typewriter you mind to mention they had in there. Quite a staff worked in there at that time. I remember the manager now, a Mr. Pitts, wonderful chap. They all seemed nice fellows in they days, provided you weren't cheeky to them. If you were cheeky to them they wouldn't have nothing to do with you.

Then next door to that was Mansfields, the furniture place and it was a beautiful bit of furniture you could buy in there, very very polished. Next to that was another pub, the Elephant. During any school holiday when I wasn't working for Mr. Wilcox I used to go down the Elephant and unhook the horses from the ponies and traps when the farmers arrived. Not just farmers: people coming in to buy boots and shoes for the children.

From there was Charlie Ross's place, the Cadet Battalion. Charlie Ross was the most brilliant character Exeter ever had. Now he had a big Tailor's shop up High Street where Austin Reed is now; he used to keep quite a few tailors in there. He was, no doubt about it, a man that liked to see the youth of Exeter being useful. He opened a cadet battalion. He supplied all the clothes, all the hats, all the boots, and he made quite a nice job of it. I myself was one of his soldiers, quite a soldier. We used to go there twice a week. There was games like three-quarter billiards, darts, skittles - I don't mean the skittles like now - and we had quite social evenings down there.

Now he liked every man, every boy as he called it, to go to camp. And I went four times as far as I can remember. The last time I went was to a place called Manaton on Dartmoor. And I can see him now, six o'clock in the morning, in his birthday suit, having a bath in cold water; cold water, six o'clock in the morning. It wasn't an ordinary bath, it was a canvas bath fixed up like a baby's cradle. And I've seen 'e come out of it pink as a pink salmon. He had lovely white hair, white moustache, white eyebrows; he looked a real picture. He spent a lot of money on the youth of Exeter and done some damn good things for 'em. He was a real gent, no doubt about it.

Next door to that were a barber's shop and 'e were a German; Treuge he was called. I've seen 'e in there cutting hair; he'd put a basin on a boy's hair and cut around. Perhaps his father would send 'im back if he hadn't cut it properly - so he cut it properly. A good barber he was too.

EAST SIDE

Coming up the other side we had Hannaford's, a butcher's shop, which was there ever since I could walk. It was there right up till they decided to make this car park there. They took away a lot of Exeter's fineries. Mr. Hannaford was a real business man, stern and 'e expected every man to pull his weight. He was a good boss all the same.

Then we come to the Wilson's timber place. We used to say when we were younger "Go in there and set fire and you'd burn half of North Street." You would have, no doubt about it. As it happened that thing never materialised. Next door to that was Sam Matter's Fish and Chip Shop; better fish and chips than you get today, I can tell you that. I don't know what he used to do to it. Well, he couldn't cope with it sometimes, couldn't fry fast enough. You used to get your money's worth. He were a nice chap; still living today - I only spoke to him the other day.

Then there was Steer's, the boot shop; quite a nice pair of boots you could buy in there; very good people they were too. Then we come to Chapple's Court which led up to Garden Square. Next door to that was Daw's the bakers, beautiful bread. The actual chap who ran the place was called Pinnell. Some reason or other he sort of hibernated and went as a monk down Buckfast Abbey. Then coming from there was Seldon, the fruit merchant. They used to do a nice trade. And beside his place you used to go for the brush factory-another place if you went and set fire to, it would burn half of North Street at that time. Squire's it was called. Thousands of brushes come out of there, thousands, in my time.

Then there was Kennedy's, the milk shop next door. Very nice people they were. Then we come to Mr. Abbot the tailor, and a better suit of clothes you would never get if you could afford it. Then we come to Fishy Stevens. He used to stand there and he'd pick up a fish and wop a cheeky one right across the face. He didn't like cheek, not at all.

And from there was the firm I used to work for, Wilcox'. Quite nice people but he liked his pound of flesh, working you know. Wonderful trade he had, wonderful. I've seen potatoes and salt fish outside on the path and a dog'd come along and wee all over it. And I used to say to Mr. Wilcox, "The dog's been here, Mr. Wilcox." "That's alright, if they eat that they'll never die." And he used to sell it too, that was the beauty of it. The store was always very clean, always a mass of white sawdust - wood floor covered in sawdust, spotlessly clean. And I've seen 'e brush it up in a bit of dirty weather, black weather, snowy weather. In fact I've brushed it up meself five times a day. We used to go down Webber's down Bonhay Road for the sawdust, a sawmill down there. He were a proper business man, no doubt about it.

Then we come to Fatty Morgan, a chap with a stomach on him like a pack of elephants. He wouldn't have any nonsense. You could buy any sweet you could mention in those days: bonbons, aniseed balls, things like that. But 'e wouldn't let two of you come to the counter at once, cos while 'e was talking to one the other one would be helping himself to aniseed balls, see. 'E wouldn't have that. You had to stand in a queue; that clever he was. He used to lose a few things quietly even then. A boy'd say, "I'll have something up on that shelf, Mr. Morgan." While he was reaching up they was helping theirselves.

A WORKING CHILDHOOD

When we left school Friday nights father used to bath us all in the tin bath downstairs, get the water out of an old-fashioned copper. After that he'd say,"Extract of almonds or syrup of figs?" We'd go out to play after; didn't make any difference, summer or winter. Next morning you was up at six o'clock. I myself had to go up the coal yard, St. David's Hill which is actually the back of Queen's Street. I used to have to go up for six pennyworth of coal with a makeshift barrow. I used to have to go up three times on Saturday morning; once for me mother and father, once for me mother's sister and once for me grandfather. 'Twas hard work. And I didn't used to get anything for that. During the week I used to have to get up at six o'clock every day. Twice a week I had to go up Hammond's, up High Street, which was a butcher's shop. I had to be up there by quarter-past-six, no later. I used to go and ask for two or three pennyworth of pieces, meat pieces, bring home enough meat to last my mother all the week until Friday. My brother, he used to have to fetch the milk early; my sister had to get up and turn the organ, the mangle; the other one had the ironing to do. When I got home from school, before going to Mr. Wilcox, I had to clean seven pairs of boots, 14 shoes, every night. My sister would do the necessary, polish up the bedrooms, my brother used to clean the windows.

The Newcombes of Preston Street

We have number 27, 28 and 29 Preston Street. We used to rent these rooms for 2/6d a week, all furnished. Mother's shop was in Preston Street too: we had a big windowed front room and a big windowed bedroom and between the two rooms were two little double doors. Mother turned the front room into a shop. Up over again was more rooms that mother used to let out: 2/6d. a week; 6d. or 4d. a night.

HARD BAKE

I was the one that made all the black and white hard bake. I was only a child but you worked then from the time you were 7 year old or before that. I used to get up 5 in the morning and get the sweets ready for Central School in Rack Street. All the black bake and white hard bake had to be made before the kids went off to school: farthing packets.

Now I'll tell 'e what tools I used to use. In mother's kitchen there was a recess. I had a paving stone from the pavement on this cupboard there; I had a glass jam jar; a clay pipe which you could get for three a penny; a lump of suet and an old, a very old saucepan; me brown sugar and water, that's all it used to take. Me pipe was to see that it was done. But twas a very old stove, an old-fashioned one.

Mrs Newcombe and Emm

You'd boil up your sweets, just the water and the sugar. You'd just put your pipe in, put it in the jar to see if it'd come out of the funnel: you'd know then that it was done. If it was still sticky it'd mean still giving more heating in case I shan't get it in time for the kids for school. But then I had to make the black and white bulls eyes out of that. I had an old floor board, two old floor boards, put up on the wall, knocked in with a chisel. And that's where I used to twist me sweets. From your saucepan you'd put it on your paving stone; you'd rub your hands well with suet; you'd catch it over one end and over the other end till it's quite cool enough; throw it on the chisel, bring it down, throw it up and bring it down. That would turn it white, a creamy white. I've got to hurry cos I've got another lot still boiling. Then I'd turn the black around the white. Perhaps mother would help; us was only tackers then.

VERY OLD CHILDREN

After us come out of school it was either ways us had to unload a load of coke that father had already got in the morning. That's what me and me brother did when us was 8 year old; us was getting on by then. Years ago we were very old children. Unload a ton of coke and coal before ever you went to school or it had to be done in the dinner time. There were some toffs about in they days and every Saturday they'd like their coal delivered. Me brother and meself used to go out with that coal on our back. 2½d for a quarter hundred weight of coal and perhaps you'd get a farthing for it.

SWEET PARENTS, LOVELY PARENTS

I had a dressmaker as I was the eldest daughter and father used to think me something, though I was covered in bruises: I used to get plenty of they with the strap cos you couldn't laugh. If you had a laugh at table, 'e'd drop tools, up over, buckle strap. A Mrs. Watkins used to live in King Street and she used to make me a new dress every week. She used to have cockles and winkles and all that kind of thing; course father liked snails and I liked snails and we used to have half a bag and mother used to do them.

Mr Newcombe

I used to be cleaned all up and sent up the yard where father'd be milking the goat; us had goats and all in that yard, chickens, a donkey each - it was a big place. And he'd take the milk that he was milking and he'd put it all down over the front of this frock, if 'e didn't like en. And I'd have to walk in then to me mother and put on one of me old frocks. Mind they were sweet parents, lovely parents.

GUT TO WORK

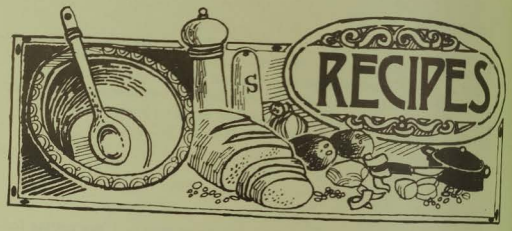
I went out to work when I was 13 on me birthday. I went up to Lloyd's Tobacco Factory, top of South Street and I got a job for 2/- a week. I had very long hair and before I could start I had to put me hair around me head and pin it up, cos you weren't allowed long hair. I was there 3 months and then I had an extra 6d so I had 2/6d. a week. My mother's went up to 2/- and mine went up to 6d. Now with that 6d I had to buy me own hair ribbon and me own hats. Well, you could do it, cos you could go in and buy a nice new hat for 2d. or 3d. If ye was lucky you could get one gived ye. There'd be a box outside, "Help yourself." You'd take two and you could make one look pretty out of the two, you see.

COURTSHIP

When I was 15 I met me husband. Well, I only went out with this boy once. It appears somebody saw me. Me father called me over the carpet: I wasn't to dare to go out with another boy and I had to marry that man. And I didn't marry him till I was 24; courted him for nine years; never had no engagement ring. As my father was dying he made me promise that I'd marry him. That was courtship then.

LEAVING HOME

I worked at the tobacco place till I was 16. From then on I was getting fed up, fed up with home and fed up with doing the different things that I had to do. I left home. But I only went in the Waverley Hotel in High Street - that's gone, isn't it? They wanted somebody to live in and I lived there all in as a chamber maid. But I was only there six months. Christmas was the end of the six months and my father sent me up a lovely parcel, sugar eggs and sweet carrots, all that sort of thing. Would I come home. Well, I went home again. Service was very nice then but you had to work very, very hard; you'd be cleaning the silver at 10 o'clock at night.



BOILED CAKE
10 oz self-raising flour
½ lb mixed dried fruit
2 oz lard
1 tsp bicarb.
1 tsp mixed spice
4 oz sugar
½ pint water/cold tea

Boil together all ingredients except flour for five minutes. Allow to cool. Then mix in the flour. Bake in moderate oven for 1-1½ hours. Keeps well in airtight tin.

F. G. Mansfield & Son

CABINET MAKERS,
UPHOLSTERERS,
ANTIQUE DEALERS AND RESTORERS,
SHOP FITTERS AND CASE MAKERS.

38, North Street, EXETER.

Back numbers available from Jenny Lloyd

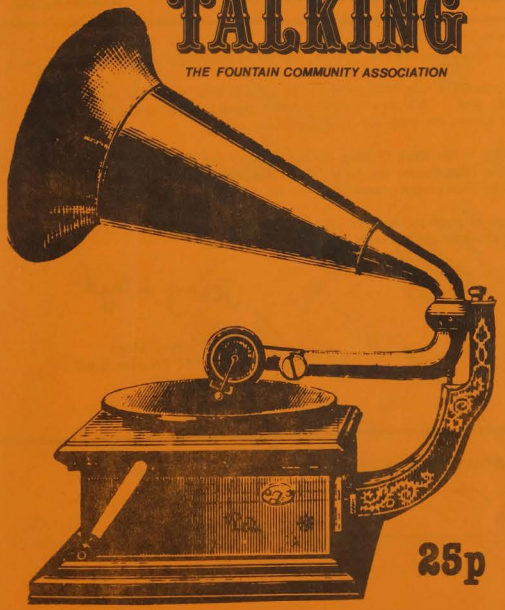
Volume 2	Characters of Exeter	10p
Volume 3	Christmas Memories and Newtown	10p
Volume 4	The West Quarter	12p
Volume 5	Carnivals	12p
	plus p & p	12p

WSL

Volume 7

PEOPLE TALKING

THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



25p

PEOPLE TALKING

People Talking is now two years old. Volume 7 is a longer and therefore more expensive edition; I hope regular readers will still find it good value.

We present a kaleidescope of the St Sidwell area up to the end of the Second World War. We hope the different accounts capture something of life in the area before the post-war reconstruction.

Thanks to the West Country Studies Library for their help in finding material for the illustrations and to Mr Cecil Wooldridge and Mrs May Balkwill for lending photographs; thanks too, to the Vicar of St Sidwell's Church.

I hope to prepare the next edition in time for Christmas. If anyone has other memories of Exeter please do contact me.

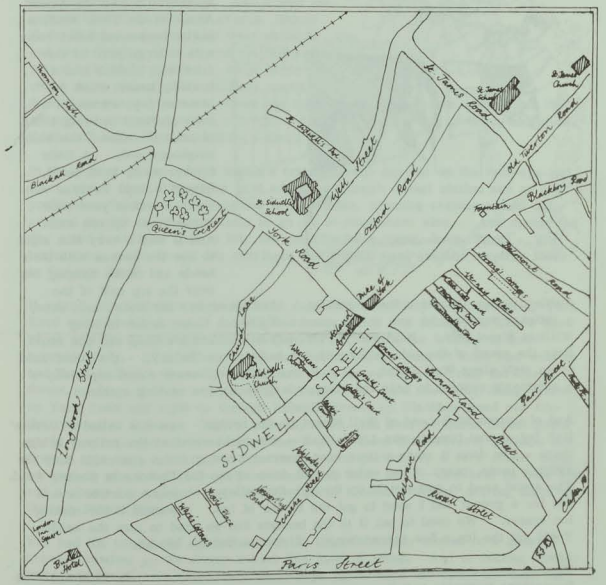
Jenny Lloyd.

June 1977

Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road
Exeter

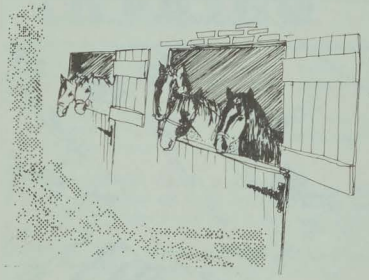
ILLUSTRATIONS: Clawson Morris

St Sidwell's before 1945



The Sights & Sounds of St Sidwell's

Mr. H. Aggett



A prominent feature of St Sidwell's was the Acland Arms on the York Road, a public house and hotel room with a large yard at the rear with stables and a brewing house which on brewing days emanated a very pleasant brewing smell of malt throughout the whole neighbourhood. A little further along York Road, beyond Acland Terrace was another cobble yard with horse boxes up one side. And it was a very fine sight to see the horses with their heads and necks hanging out over the top half of the stable doors. It was a livery stables. And there was Mr Roach next door, a vetinary surgeon; he was on the corner of Church Lane, which is King William Street now. Next door to him was a blacksmith's shop and you could hear the sound of the old smithy with his hammer on the anvil - the sound used to go right along Well Street. And it was quite a pleasant sound especially of a summer's evening to hear the clang, clang as he was making a shoe.

And of course at the end of Well Street by the bridge - now it's called St James' Halt but at that time it was Lion's Halt - you could stand on the railway bridge there - I've done it many a time on a summer evening - and you could hear the rythmic pump, pump of the water pumps down at the Ice Factory in Bonhay Road. The sound used to come right up through the valley. I was a sort of errand boy for a grocer and I used to get the blocks of ice. He used it for making ice cream. We used to put it in the buckets and we used to turn the handle. You'd get the ice a few pence cheaper if you fetched the blocks.

Then of course on Sunday mornings another delightful feature: you could hear the Devonshire Regiment battalion when they were in the barracks; you could hear them playing their regimental marching song, "Over the Fields and Turnips" and

I think it's one of the finest marching songs in the British Army- it's very cheerful, you know. That was the Higher Barracks at Howell Road; a busy barracks in those days, that sort of leant some character to Exeter: all the soldiers going up and down. They used to march to the Cathedral for their Sunday morning Church Parade, come back to the barracks and they'd give a concert in the centre of the parade ground and the people, the public at large, were allowed to come into the barracks. And it was the custom then to promenade around, like at Hyde Park; the women with their parasols and their Sunday dresses and the fellas just slowly walking around, while these chaps were playing their military music.

And of course if you were lucky and knew someone you were invited into the officers' mess and you had a drink. I was invited on two or three occasions. It was all very nice, something's that's gone really.

In those days of course the nation's transport was carried on the railways and there was a very busy goods yard adjoining Queen's Street station and at night you'd hear the trains, the engines in particular, shunting various trucks that arrived by day up into one train to go off to somewhere else. And during the day you'd hear them quite a bit, the metallic bang, bang, bang, bang. The trains were made up and the carriages and trucks were shunted together there in Queen's Yard.

It wasn't an uncommon sight in those days to see bullocks being driven up York Road into Sidwell Street to a slaughter house which was behind the King's Head which was on the corner of Summerland Street, where the laundry is now approximately. Behind there, off Summerland Street was an arch that went in and these bullocks were driven in there; they drove them up from the Queen Street goods yard to be slaughtered. Very often you'd see sheep being driven up York Road and right up through Sidwell Street, up Blackboy Road and into the country to farms. They'd come by train, you see, at Queen Street goods yard; they unloaded them and then they'd drive them out; drovers, perhaps one drover, one man. There was one character in particular, a very clever chap; he used to wheel a bicycle so's he could ride back home - one arm he had; him and a sheep dog and he'd have anything up to a hundred sheep, driving them up through Sidwell Street.

You had the trams and cabs then and the trams dutifully slowed to a general crawl, crawling up the street behind this herd of sheep. And of course another thing was there were cabs. In those days there were cab ranks all over the city in different places, like taxi ranks. The cabbies used to drive up through

Sidwell Street and in one or two places there were double tram tracks and the cabbies would drive along and the wheels would drop down into the grooves of the tram lines; all of a sudden they'd give a fearful lurch as a tram track would run into another one; the horse was going straight and the wheels would be taking the cab into a new track and nearly throw the cabby off. And of course boys at that time - I can vouch for this - used to take a delight in jumping on the axels of the rear of the cab and riding on the springs of the cab; we'd crouch underneath. And the other kids would shout out to the cabman, "Whip behind, cabby!" And they'd flick their whip up and over and sometimes the tail of the whip would get you across the face and it would sting like hell. But the chance of having a free ride on the back of a cab was really something. They were single horse cabs with the cabby up on the box; it wasn't a hansome cab with the cabby at the rear.

At this time I'm talking about, 50 years ago, there was the occasional car and lorry. I'll tell you there was two types of cars: a Trojan car with a chain drive and hard wheels, very thin wheels; they used to catch in the tram lines as well and they'd come to grief. And there was another car called the Climo, little tiny engine in it. The headmaster of the school I went to, he had one - nine day wonder with the boys, cos there were cars, but not many.

Walking up Sidwell street on a Saturday night was a real experience; you could sense an atmosphere of excitement; because if you walked up Sidwell Street, possibly you left London Inn Square where the old Exeter Hippodrome, Exeter Variety Theatre was, you know; they'd be queuing up there for the second house. Perhaps you'd been to the first house and then you'd walk up Sidwell Street and most of the shops were open and brightly lit. And there were crowds of people; the pavements were packed with people - you often had to step into the road. Of course the pavements weren't so wide as now as they've taken the building line back. The original building line was the church wall of St Sidwell's Church. As I say there were these crowds of people right out to the edge of the curbs; the trams clattering up through, bang, bang,

bang; the tram chaps'd stamp their feet on the bell. The shops were brightly lit; the butchers stood outside their shops shouting, "Come on ladies, get your weekend joint."

The pubs, the Old Coach and the New Coach and Horses and the Victory - oh they'd be in fine voice on a Saturday night. Occasionally a door would burst open and someone would come out to go across to the other side and as they came out you'd get this volume of song come out - you know, all the old favourites, Nelly Dean and all that. And you'd go on up the road and as I say it was really alive; the shops used to close somewhere between eight and nine. Of course, it's gone now.

Of course the road then was wooden blocks - the whole of Sidwell Street from the top of Paris Street right up to the fountain. You used to hear the horses clop, clop, clop, going up. I think they were taken away when they took a lot of the tram lines away; some of the tram lines are still buried in the ground but I know they took quite a lot away. But it was rather unique and they were so hard. They used to have to repair some of them sometime. Course it was a good surface; they didn't get slippery which was an advantage, specially where horses were concerned.

Then of course St Sidwell's had its share of eccentric characters. There was one chap popularly called Fighting Mac. Now he was a porter for a well known Sidwell Street trader. He had a habit of carrying his goods and he'd come to a lamp post, and one lamp post in particular which was his favourite, on the corner of Well Street - it's got a circular island around it; he'd come along Church Lane carrying his boxes and he'd reach this lamp post and he'd chuck his boxes down and he'd start squaring up to the lamp post. He'd viciously go in and let one out, bob down like as if the lamp post was giving him one. He'd go on for about ten minutes doing that.

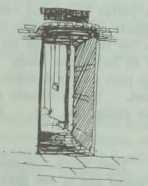
That was one chap - Fighting Mac we used to call him. Then there was another fellow, Slab Dab. He was a character that used to go round and if you gave him a halfpenny he'd recite a lot of doggerel, improvise more or less on the spot, rhyming to quite a large degree. But he'd intersperse it every so often with "Slab dab"; then he'd go on again and start another verse and then "Slab dab". And we used to pay him this halfpenny.

Of course then there were the Bill Board men, the sandwich board men that used to walk around. There was one chap called Bread and Butter Harry;

then there was another fellow Bug Whiskers. They'd advertise for shops and any local events. They'd just slowly walk up and down the town. That in itself gave a certain colour to the place 'cos the posters stuck on their boards were very often p'raps a bright red or yellow.

Then of course the other old character which people have mentioned lots of times was old Taffy Fulford with his little cart and sweets. "Plates, cups and saucers," that was his cry. I saw him one day coming along Well Street with his little guttering lights either side of his cart, you know, pony pulling. And something frightened his pony and the pony bolted and bolted so suddenly that poor old Taffy's stock slid off into the road. Poor old boy. He used to go right out into the country; places like Tiverton and Bradninch and all the way round there. And you'd see him coming back quite late, half past nine, ten o'clock at night.

Then there were the girls from the farms with milk on yokes, serving the milk at the doors, and the old fish men with their carts, calling out, "Dawlish Mackerel"; and the scissor and knife grinders. You know it all gave the city quite a liveliness in the air that there was something on all the time. Nowadays it seems so dead after about half past six.



There were numerous courts that ran down. Very often you had an arched entrance and then it would run down and you'd get these small cottages; sometimes they had little tiny front gardens; sometimes they were just open out to the centre. Course you had a great sense of community with people living like that. People got to know each other very well and there was sort of a pride in their particular little area. They didn't like people other than the residents coming down these courts. You had to be there on business - no use going down there to loiter around 'cos they'd soon turn you out. Everyone knew each other; it was a small compact community.

There's still left some of the cottages in Clarence Place. Half of them have been pulled down but one side they're still remaining, the original Clarence Place. On a Saturday night you could get some entertainment there. When the fellows came out of the pubs they used to stagger down over the steps, steep steps going down, you see, to the little cottages down the bottom. There used

to be all sorts of fun and games depending to some extent on what had happened during the day. There'd be quarrels, you know, particularly where children were concerned. If Tommy had given Bill a bashing or something of that nature, the women would carry it on and then when the old man come they'd tell him about it and he'd go outside and you'd have trouble.

During the First World War several of the schools round here were turned into hospitals for wounded soldiers. Between 1914 and 1918 there used to be hospital trains come into Queen Street Station - course there were colossal casualties in the fighting then, more so than in the last war. We boys used to go down to Northenhay, there alongside, and watch the chaps, poor fellows, coming out of the trains. Those that could walk were walking, and 1917 when Gerry was using gas, it was pathetic to see a lot of the fellows getting out of the trains, blinded with gas, and going along in crocodile holding the man in front to steer him along. And Bishop Blackall School was a military hospital and St Sidwell School. I can't remember what happened to the children.

St Sidwell School was a barracks as well because I remember they stationed a battalion of the Black Watch there and I thought it was wonderful because I'd never seen Scotchmen with kilts and the tartans before. They left the barracks late on a night to go over to France and I remember being taken over to watch them come out playing their bagpipes and all the rest of it as they marched off. And at that particular battle I think there were one or two V.C.'s and they were nearly all slaughtered to a man.

Exeter was quite full of wounded soldiers like I say. Of course the soldiers all had blue uniforms on; that was the distinguishing mark of a wounded soldier. They used to wear a blue serge uniform with a red tie so that everyone knew that they were wounded soldiers.

The top of Sidwell Street still contained some of its rural aspect 'cos there were trees along the pavement there, you know, where the chemist shop is - there were quite tall trees along the pavement down there. And of course the fountain was over there - there wasn't the roundabout you see. Course Sidwell Street was blitzed fairly badly. From York Road down to Paris Street it was practically flattened.

You know St Sidwell's Avenue, flanking St Sidwell's School: a heavy bomb - I should think it was a 4,000, 6,000 pound bomb - pitched exactly in the middle of that avenue. I went down there a few minutes after the bomb had pitched. You know when children play with cards they stack them all up and then they touch one and they all go down, well that blast was so terrific that all the houses had gone down like that, right down to the bottom of the Avenue each side. You could see them with their bay windows still intact in a sense but all leaning down. There was a terrific crater there in the centre of the road.

Course the other scare at the time was when those big houses in York Road caught fire. There's only two or three now but there was a whole crescent of them which ran right up to St Sidwell's School. Well soldiers had been billeted in these houses and they had ammunition in there, small arms ammunition. There were a lot of incendiaries dropped and they caught these houses afire and this small arms ammunition was exploding but is sounded like machine gun fire. We'd been warned that after a raid there might be parachute troops dropped and at that time there was a scare that he was going to invade. Course they heard this small ammunition going off and everyone thought it was street fighting - they all thought Gerry was here, see.

And of course Well Street is notable for its wells. You know those cottages at the end of Well Street towards York Road, there was a well in one of those. It might have been filled in now 'cos I've seen they've done some building different there. There was a well in the garden of number 19 which was an Off-Licence where my parents lived at the time. I know that's filled in. Then there was another well further along on the left; just beyond the Jet Garage there was a printers' and there was a well in that garden. There was another one and I'm sure they built a house over it, right opposite the hoardings of St James football ground. Several years ago that house sank down: the rim of the front room was on a level with the curb. Of course they built it up again. I know there's wells on the other side of the railway bridge. The Cathedral used to be supplied with water by a conduit from a spring where Lion's Halt was.

Down Longbrook Street there was old Harry 'Ems, the stone mason. The legend was that he came into Exeter as a tramp and picked up this horse shoe and if you look down there now you can see this horse shoe up in the wall: "Faithful not falling" he'd got written over it. He was a stone mason by trade and he started a business there and it was quite a prosperous business in the 1800's. We call him Harry 'Ems but it was Hems, H-E-M-S. He kept a great big crane out the back for moving stones.

I remember as a boy, very adventuresome, we went down a little lane behind Queen's Crescent and climbed over the wall one evening. It was almost rural where that car park is now at the back of St Sidwell's Church; it was all sort of rough ground, hedges overgrown and trees and things. We climbed into this yard; we were creeping about among these grave stones - it was rather eerie you know. In those days grave stones were quite a feature in cemetaries: people used to have very ornate stones, characters out of the Bible carved and all that. We got into this outer shed place where the stone masons had been working and there was a long tall box. "I wonder what's in that box." And we opened it and there was a ruddy skeleton stood in there. We turned and ran and leaped over the wall. It was years before I found out why they had a skeleton in a mason's yard. Apparently it's like with a painter: he gets to know the muscles of the body 'cos it gives him a feeling for the thing and this was the intention of having a skeleton - I suppose the sculptor when he was chipping away at the stone could look at the skeleton to give him some idea.

There was an ironmonger's shop that had a big kettle hanging out the front as a sign, corner of Cheeke Street. It all added a something different to the street really. Course there was Hunt, the baker, adjacent to St Sidwell's Church, where the church yard is. He had big double doors where he used to drive his horses in and stable them alongside his bakery. In those days it used to be quite a feature to see the youngsters outside the bakers' shops about half past seven in the morning. Before they opened the shop they used to sell them all the previous day's buns and cakes: they got them much cheaper, see; gave them quite a nice little feed.

There's only Panter's left now of the old shops; Wipples was down in the High Street in those days. Now it's all big concerns. The way the economy's gone, they streamline everything.

A St Sidwell's Childhood

Mrs. B. Clifton

I was born in Union Terrace; that was a very nice terrace. You walked in and there were all big houses either side. I suppose there were 40 houses down there. And we had a front room, sitting room, scullery. The houses were all grouped around the court. Some had gardens in front. And everybody knew everybody else. My Granny, if anyone died, she was the one who called and saw to them and laid them out. And if you was in a bit of trouble, then you'd go to a person down the bottom and she would help you out of it. Now you see it's everybody for theirselves; everybody trying to out-do everybody else.

I'm talking about when I was a child. I used to go at half past eight in the morning to Hunt's the Bakers - that was next to St Sidwell's Church - and get two pennyworth of stale buns. You had a straw basket in those days and that used to be nearly filled up with rounds of sponges and all the rest of it. We only went there once a week; didn't see the need to go any more times 'cos there was plenty enough in there for us.

Then on Saturday evening my mother used to take me to the Hippodrome; I suppose we went to the first house and we went up the iron staircase, all up and up and up; 3d in the gods - I don't know what it was for me 'cos I was about eight. Well we used to come out of there and then we used to go down the High Street; the shops used to open Saturdays till 7 or 8 o'clock at night. And mother used to say to me, "Right, now, go into Home and Colonial" - that was the one down the High Street and they had one up St Sidwell's - "and get three pennyworth of pieces of bacon." Well, it was just a sea of people; there was no queuing up - just a mass sea. But me, being a little girl used to waddle me way round and whisper to the man, "Three pennyworth of pieces of bacon." "Speak up my dear, speak up." "Three pennyworth of peices of bacon, please," and he used to go behind the counter into a room and bring out this great parcel: ham bones, ends of bacon, and all the rest of it.

And from there we used to go down to Eastman's, the butcher's and go in and get a joint. If there was a certain man that served me he only charged sixpence, but otherwise it was a shilling if it was another man. And we had our vitamins, you know, in they days. We used to go to Darches, the fruit shop; still there today down Fore Street. Three pennyworth of waste fruit and they gived you the carrier as well: bruised apples, dark bananas, bit of bruise on the pears. And my mother used to go to Hoskins' down Longbrook Street. You took a pillow slip and you got yesterday's bread, 'cos they never sold stale bread or nothing. She used to have half a pillowslip; it was about 2d or 3d, old loaves of bread.

Then when my granny died we had to move into rooms in Paris Street up over a fish and chip shop. And on Sundays, because we only lived in rooms and we didn't have no place to cook, we used to put the little sixpenny joint in with the spuds all round it and I used to go down to Hoskin's, the bakers and fetch it all 12 o'clock.

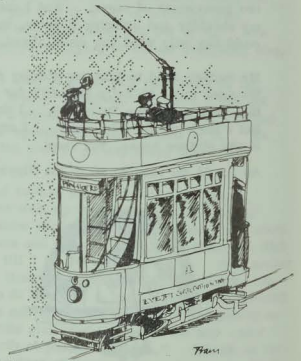
And the friendship of the people that would help one another out: over the little alleyways down Cheeke Street there were houses and they had little rooms where they sold bits of sugar. You'd go over for a pennyworth of tea, two pennyworth of sugar. And I can remember buying coal and putting it on my shoulder and bringing it home, so it couldn't have been that heavy. You could buy only what you could afford.

My mother used to take me Monday nights to the Palladium in Paris Street. We used to go to Taffy Fulford's for a pennyworth or ha'porth of waste and then we'd go to the Palladium. I don't suppose they paid much for me. But I knew all the film stars. I expect if the truth was known, I was born in the picture house, you know.

As I said we used to go to the Hippodrome on Saturday nights which was the musical. You were sat on the long forms up in the gods. I'd be up doing my own act in the gods. At one time - I was only seven then - I used to do the errands for the little dwarves that used to come. I don't know if they were lodging near me or what but I remember they were on the act at the Hippodrome. They were about as tall as me and I were only seven. I remember one of the gentleman dwarves taking me home under his umbrella and giving me sixpence. That was a lot of money. I had to do a paper round for sixpence. Mind it wasn't a very big paper round; it was the shops up St Sidwell's. First of all you had to go over to Parr Street - that was the man Mr Stoneman who owned the paper round and you collected your papers. Mine wasn't a very big round - I don't expect I'd have been allowed to do a big round. But it was Stansfield's and Whites Garage across the road from the top of Paris Street, and in the Maypole, about seven shops, and they gave me sixpence a week. And then I had to go back to Parr Street and Mrs Stoneman, that was, Mr Stoneman's mother, would have bread and butter all cut up in a bag: bread and butter for the children and bread and cheese for the men. And once she gave me the bread and cheese by a mistake - ooh, it was lovely.

When I lived up over the fish and chip shop some nights I used to go down and chop the chips. I wasn't very old you know, wasn't allowed really. If I'd have gone to work when I was seven instead of going to school, I'd have made a fortune.

You know Belmont Park, on bonfire night they used to build a wooden house there and of course they had the railings all around and you had to stay outside the railings with your mother. They used to build this wooden house and they used to set it afire and the firemen used to put it out.



And I can remember the first electric tram that come down St Sidwell's, all lit up with electric light bulbs. And also at Cheeke Street, going up to get five pounds of potatoes and a rabbit for Christmas. For the poor you used to have a ticket. Then just before Christmas you got five pounds of potatoes, a rabbit and a swede or something like that. Usually I never had my ticket but I got me rabbit just the same. You see I learnt to use my charm, my dear. There were all the ladies weighing up the potatoes, rabbit and turnip and I said, "I haven't got a ticket and I haven't got a Daddy," and they goes among themselves, "Give her the rabbit."

Later I worked at the Bude, Ferris', at the top of Paris Street; that went in the blitz. That was a beautiful restaurant and they had the bands on Wednesday afternoon and they'd come and dance on their half days. I worked in the Still Room, that's where you made the tea and coffee and the grill orders for the tea dances on Wednesday afternoon. There'd be hundreds of toast orders; I'd be off my head cos there'd be beans on toast, sardines on toast, scotch eggs on toast.

Well there were rats in all these big places. I was terrified of them and I know when I went to work at the Bude you'd go in one morning at nine o'clock and you'd leave at six and have your food and the next day you'd go in at ten and work till ten o'clock at night; you'd work in the Still Room serving up what was necessary. I was there one morning waiting for the girls to come in to

pick up their dinner and I saw this thing move and I thought to meself, "Now what was that?" And it was a rat and he was that long. And I ran and he ran with me. They found me up on the roof. It was terrible. Madam sent someone up to get me down and said, "Don't be so stupid, girl; It won't hurt you." That weren't no good to me. After that whenever they pulled out the silver knives and forks, the cutlery, I'd go, 'cos they'd have nests behind there.

Madam was very strict; demanded a lot of respect - just one look from her was enough. Mind she were a wonderful woman. She had her morning dress and her evening gown for dinner. The waitresses and the inside staff, we were just a big family. If anybody was in trouble she'd see them out of it. We all loved her like. People in they days, you had a job and you did it. You felt responsible; you were in it.

Then the war came and I went to Whippells and made the parachutes. I hated every minute of it.

Shopping in Sidwell Street

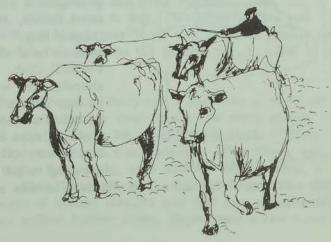
Mr. H. Snell

Starting at London Inn Square there was Kerslake's the paper shop where you could get anything; whether it was a paper 12 months old you could always get it down there. Then the Penny Bazaar used to be next door which later became Marks and Spencers; then they moved down opposite the General Post Office in High Street. Then there was the Bristol Inn, Shepherd's the grocers, then the china shop where they used to have all the china outside, old cups all cracked. Then of course you came up to the White Lion, then the garage and a few big shops, one of them was King's the drapers and Dolling, the tobacconist. A little further on you had Freeth's Toffees; they used to make their own sweets and toffees at the back. Then moving on further up there was Gold and Wills, the old fashioned draper. Then there was Mrs Maggs, the boot and shoe shop on the corner of Church Lane which was very good. Of course then there was Panter's drapery shop which in my days was the grandfather of the present Panter.

Next door to Panter's there was Hunt's, the baker. As a school child I used to have to get up early in the morning, go to Hunt's, Hoskins' and Johnny Lock, the baker to buy stale bread and stale cakes in a pillow slip. Everybody had to be there as early as possible 'cos the earlier you got the better sort you had. Then on Saturdays you used to go to Hunt's and get a tin and the dough and take that home and your mother used to make a dough cake and then you'd take it down to the bake house and they used to bake it for you 'cos people never had the money to keep the ovens going; it was all ranges then. People had long families in those days.

But on Sunday your mother used to get you your cooked dinner ready with the sunday joint and then me and the youngsters, we used to take it down to Hunt's the bakers. They used to bake it for her and you'd go back dinner time when mother was ready and fetch it back. I thought we paid 2d to have it cooked but my mother says she only paid a penny. She said to me, and this is going back to about 1916, she said, "Do you remember the time when so and so went down with the pan to get their dinner and he was bringing it back home and when he got to the courtway it slipped off 'cos the pan was hot. All the children and the women came out and scooped it all off the ground; 'twas rabbit and all that; I can see it now." We were all told not to say anything to the boy's father and his mother 'cos there would have been a row. He always would have a cooked dinner and he never knew 'twas all scooped up from the road. Of course back in those days father always come first. 'Tisn't like today when they give the children the food first and then father and mother have theirs. Father always had to have the best in those days.

Then we come to Weslyean Court and then there was Ambrose another big drapers - a very old fashioned one as well. You could get everything in the drapery line but you didn't get them selling everything like you are today. Then there was Hawkins', the greengrocer and they only sold greengrocery, nothing else; just kept to their own trade. Then there was a courtway, then a tailor's shop, White's the tailors. Then Tanner the butcher - Stokes come after him. Further up was another Freeth's shop but that was only a shop to sell stuff; down the other place they had a shop and a factory. Then you had the Acland Hotel and in behind the old Acland Hotel they had a big yard. On Fridays, which was market day, they used to have all the cows and all that come in that yard. Someone would bring the cows to the yard and someone would pick 'em up again; it was kind of a meeting place for the farmers. The cattle market was down Bonhay Road. And there used to be a fellow there that drove the cows.



As a child I always knew him as Jack the Cow Walloper. Of course if he heard you say, "Here comes Jack the Cow Walloper," you'd have a wallop.

There were a tremendous lot of courtways in between the shops: there was Woodbine Courtway up there where you could go up and buy pears, because they had big gardens up there; you got a ha'porth of pears - well that would last 'e a week - what they called stewing pears.

After you passed the Acland you had Botting the Chemist. When I was a boy he was a very old man. He was one of these chemists that if you cut your finger or had any complaint he would dress it and everything in the shop and mix up some medicine - very cheap, he wasn't dear. You see in they days you couldn't afford to go to the doctor and you couldn't go to hospital unless you had what they called a recommend.

Then nearly up to the Fountain there used to be the United Services Club. There was a great lawn that stretched in front and you walked up the path amongst this lawn to the entrance. Just past there was Cottrell, the grocers and wine and spirit shop where you could get whiskey at 12/6 a bottle. Then there was Sellick's - they were very large furniture removal and storage people. Then there was J. B. Lee the bookseller; everything was on the religious side. And then I believe - some says I'm wrong - there was a private school which later moved over to Pennsylvania.

Now as you goes over to go down the other side there used to be three houses on the corner of what we used to know as Belmont Road, right opposite the Fountain. As you came down, you passed Jones, the greengrocer and then there was a very funny, short fellow, very old when I knew him - Dapper May. If I remember rightly, he used to be a share holder in Exeter City Football Club. No matter what Exeter City shareholders wanted to do or the football club he was always against it; anything to do with spending money, he was always against it. It was always said when I was a youngster, that Exeter City shareholders would give anything to get hold of his shares but he wouldn't sell, no. He had a boot repairs; he was a well known character - very, very small.

Then coming down the road, there was the Co-operative on Verney Place, a very large building in they days. After Verney Place there was Chowings, the monument and grave stone place, then on down was Ridler the dairy. You passed two or three shops down to the Red Lion Hotel and next to the hotel they had a big yard and there was houses down there; it was called Red Lion Court. Then there were some more small shops and just before Summerland Street was Tasker's who was more or less a draper for kiddies. But that stretch of shops from the Post Office to the corner of Summerland Street haven't altered a bit.

Further down past Gould's Court there came Satterly the baker and he used to sell cigarettes and all. What I'm going to say now a lot of people don't believe: I used to go in there when I was going to school and I left school in 1924 - I used to go in there for an old lady in Weslyean Court and she had a grandson. The boy's father was dead nuts against his son 'cos he wouldn't do no work. Course his Gran used, on the sly, to go over and give him cigarettes. And she used to catch we children to go over to Satterly's to get a ha'porth of Woodbines. John Satterly was one of these people that if you went in the shop and the Woodbines was in a packet of five, you would only get two, but the next one that came after you would get the three. He would not either break a cigarette in half, neither would he gain a cigarette. He was that honest. Packet of Woodbines was a penny.

Moving on from there was Gatty's Court where Hubble Bubble and all they lived. He always played the accordion. As I look back on it now it was always the same tune. In his own way he was a very nice fellow but as youngsters you torments 'em. Then there was another well known character: you used to see him up Sidwell Street at times but where he lived to I don't know. That was a fellow called Billy Buttons. He used to have all buttons down him - not like a Pearly King though. There was Slab Dab of course - he lived in Windsor Terrace in Summerland Street. He used to say little rhymes. We, as youngsters, me mates and that, always used to say, "Well, we'll give you something." Course after we'd got him to say it we was gone; us always used to catch him like that. "Slab dab, slab dab on the garden wall." But he was a nice old man.

Then there was John West's the butcher and dairyman - they was a very old established firm. Now moving along further down was a few more shops, then there was Beckett's; they dealt with chiefly a lot of children's stuff. Then there was the Port House Laundry; that was only a small place. Then there was Parker's garage, then Malden's the fish people, then another baker's shop, a confectionary he was as well. Then Leonard's C.D. Stores where you could go in and buy ha'porth or pennyworth of broken biscuits and that was a feed - t'would last you all day. Then as you walked further down, there were a few more shops, then it became Cheeke Street.

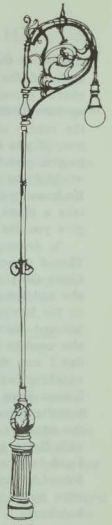
There was an ironmonger's on the corner with all the kettles and old tin cans. And Mr Shapley used to make keys. Back in they days it wasn't like they are today, just put 'em in a machine and let the machine do it; he'd take a blank key and the key you took in to be done, and he'd put it on a cake of soap. First he'd get an impression of it as a mould like and then he'd work from that. That's how he used to do his keys - with an ordinary cake of soap. I used to work in Shapley's so I seen a lot of it. Course if you had a tin kettle which was always on the fire the bottom didn't last very long. And the kettle was always boiling no matter what house you went in and you was always asked if you would have a cup of tea. Eventually the bottom of the kettle was almost touching the spout, it had had so many new bottoms and we'd say, "We can't repair this one no more."

Then as you went further down the road there was Damerel's, the ironmongers - that was a very large shop, one of the biggest shops in Sidwell Street. Then further on there was Billy Mitchel, the undertaker. Then there was Bearne's, the stationers and printers, and they used to do all the printing in Sidwell Street in those premises - that used to be downstairs. You could hear the machines and all that going. Then there were some more shops; nobody outstanding and then you came down to another pub called the Poltimore Arms which had two bay windows with small panes of glass bulging out like; that became where Motor Macs opened up. Then another well known firm, Frisby's the boot shop. Then there used to be Mardon and Son, wallpaper and decorator business - that was another very old place. Then further on you had Hammett's Dairy. Hammett's Dairy was lovely to see because they used to have all the horses outside. In they days the people driving the ponies used to get all the harness and brass polished and their churns of milk. And I've seen on College Rag days they come and unhook the horses and tip the cart right upside down. All the milk wasted, but mind you the College authorities used to pay for it. They didn't do nothing to the animal or anything like that; they'd always take it out of the shafts first.

Then as you move down the next building that strikes my mind was Exeter Electricity Company; they was next door to the Victory Inn if I remember rightly. Every afternoon, tea time, just before it got dark, you'd see some fellows come out of there with a pole on their shoulder, and they'd go along hooking the switch on; the lamps used to have a little catch hanging down. Next morning they used to start all over again and then they'd push 'em up.

Then on top of Paris Street there was a newsagent, Stile's; half the shop was in Sidwell Street and the other half was in Paris Street. Then across the road was the Bude Hotel; then there was a chemist shop, Sloman's and then you came into Southernhay. On the corner was Dodd's the hatters; they sold nothing else but hats. Course everybody wore hats in those days. Then there was Cournter's,

an off-licence spirit place. He used to go round and massage people though chiefly they went to him. 'Twas very rare, they tell me, that if you had to be carried down there, you didn't walk out on your own - oh yes, wonderful bloke.



There was a butcher's shop in between and then the Cathedral Dairy. They had horses and carts, of course. And they also employed youngsters whilst they was going to school, on the milk rounds. If you was a youngster, all depending on what age you was, you would have two half gallons of milk, your pint measure and your half pint measure hung on a yoke across the shoulder. As you got a bit older you had gallon ones put on if you wanted 'em; got more money - never mind about the weight, it was the money you was after.

All my family, there were seven of us, all went through the same classes at St Sidwell's school. The headmaster was Teddy Nicholls as we used to call him. He was a rugby player - course it was a rugby school. He used to pick you up in the playground, put you down and pick you up - you was a matchstick. He tried to force rugby on you. The majority of us wasn't interested in rugby - soccer was our game- what we called football in those days.

Every day at lunchtime - and we never used to fall out about it - some of us would not play soccer in the playground: we'd have one fellow on the corner of the railway bridge in Pennsylvania, that was his position; he could see Mr Nicholls's house. When Mr Nicholls came out, then that boy that was watching his house would pass it on to a boy down the corner of York Road; that one would wave his arms to the boy that was posted up outside the school gates. As soon as you had the signal, "He's coming!" instead of playing soccer you'd be playing rugby. And another thing: if you was in Belmont Park playing soccer - we used to play soccer over there before those huts was built - if anyone reported to Mr Nicholls that some of his boys were playing soccer you used to get the cane the next morning. And this was for playing soccer after school.

Course in those days you all had to wear a school cap, not so much school uniform like it is today, but the hat you had to wear. Well, it was a church school so we used to see the rector very often, and if you was walking up Sidwell Street - it doesn't matter if you was walking on the other side of the road - and he thought that you'd seen him or made up his mind he'd seen you, if you didn't touch your cap to him, he'd come over the school specially to give you the stick 'cos you hadn't lifted your cap. Some mornings he would come and he'd take the sixth and seventh standards as they were called. He knew everyone by their name; he would know me as Harry. He would take a class and if you didn't answer right and he thought you knew, he'd give you the cane, the rector would.

Then I remember another time - I'm going back now 50 years - I was in Class One, aged seven, just come up from Infants. We had a teacher and she had the habit, if you done wrong or she thought you had, she'd stand you on the form at the back and you had to watch her. If you took your eyes off her one second the cane would hit 'e. She was so accurate with that cane: she used to bend him back and flip him through the air. I remember one day I was stood up there on the form and I was near the window and I was watching her. For a second, a split second, I took me eyes off her and as I must have looked around quick I seen this stick coming. It used to come with terrific force and I dodged it and 'e went right through the glass, right through the windows. And do you know, a woman was passing under and she got cut with flying glass. Ooh, the row over that! Enquiry, everything like. Course I got into trouble for dodging; I should have stopped it. If you notice St Sidwell School where the bell is, just round there the windows have got all this fine wire mesh: well, they put that up after. I always remember that - she was a knockout. That was the sort of thing that used to go on in they days.

St. Sidwell's School

'Twas Amazing They Days

Mrs. M. Challice
Mrs. L. Robinson
Mr. S. Robinson

I know when I was a kid money was scarce; course there was no employment benefit then, was there? When it was snowing my father used to come home and get a shovel and go out and sweep away the snow for about a shilling; just so's mother could get a meal for us, you know. You could get a meal then for a shilling but you can't now.

We used to take the pillowcase down Hoskins' and get three pennyworth of stale bread. We were lucky if we were there in front to get it; you had to stand in front of the window and then when they weren't busy in the shop the baker would come down and open up the window and we used to get three pennyworth of stale bread, or sixpennyworth, depending how funds was. Sometimes we'd have all brown, sometimes wholemeal but we all liked white. Then we used to go to another baker's shop and line up there for three pennyworth of stale cakes.

Then there was another shop in St Sidwell's called Satterly; us'd go up there for bread too; half a quarter loaf you had to ask for and she'd weigh it and if it wasn't right weight she'd put the bun on top of 'en for ye and us used to eat the bun before we went home. And us used to go over Hunt's of a Saturday if us was well britched and get half of dough. All you had to do was put your sugar, your lard and your fruit in, mix it all up together, take it back and they'd bake 'en for ye and you had a beautiful dough cake for a shilling. They'd bake your dinner for a shilling down Hoskins'. Us used to take a basin down the hotels and get three pennyworth of dripping - they used to sell all the meat fat.

What about when us used to go down the Blanket Society? Us used to go and hire out blankets, you see. You had to pay a shilling for this card from the Parish and then you'd take it down the Blanket Society down the Friars and they'd let you have a blanket - just one blanket and then you had to wash 'en and take 'en back clean. The ladies used to sit with the blankets round their legs and then they'd hold up these blankets and if there was a spot on 'em you had to take 'en home and wash 'en again. And the ladies were sat there with the blankets wrapped round their legs and us poor devils had to go and get 'em - that was the charity ladies; you see they was better off: they could sit with the blankets round them.

Then when I was a little 'un, a neighbour used to say to me, "Go up the pub," I used to go up the Ackland Arms, that was the old pub, corner of York Road:

"Half a pint of beer and please for mother's bit of bread and cheese." 'Twas amazing they days.

Us used to go and get the supper beer for mother and father and they used to have one glass on the table and they had to take it in turns to have a drink. Us used to take a bottle up the pub and they used to seal it with a white bit of paper across the top. I used to come down Baker's Court, down to Union Terrace where we lived and I used to have a swig out of this bottle and fill him up with water under the tap. Me father used to pick up the glass from the table when it was his turn and say, "Hmm, beer isn't very good tonight."

I know when my kids were small and my husband used to like cider and he'd come home half boozed, he'd call the kids in: "Go down and get a pint of cider." And I'd be waiting for them when they came up: I'd throw half of it away and fill him up with water. And they used to say that's the worst thing you can do, fill it up with water; it's worse than ever.

I went to St Sidwell's School first of all. You used to have to pay to go to school there. Very often I've been sent home for me fees which was only a shilling. They used to say, "Millie Robinson, go home and fetch your fees." Miss Brown was the Headmistress of St Sidwell's School when I was there. Then mother couldn't afford to keep me there and I had to go to St James'. There was six or seven of us then. St Sidwell's being a Church school, you see, you had to pay. Then I went to St James', didn't have to pay up there.

The children didn't used to get into trouble so much in they days; if they got into trouble the policeman would give them a clip across the earhole and send 'em home. Us used to all assemble outside the telegraph pole at the bottom of Cheeke Street and all the lads used to get together there and play what they call 'outings': one fellow would be 'it' and us had to chase back to where he was. Us used to climb over people's cars and everything. And then there was this old shop in there, Huxter's shop - my mother always used to call it 'Uxter shop; she was called Strong and many a time us has been there for half a pound of salt fish for father's tea. Us used to play games there: all line up in front of the window and you had to pick a letter, say 'S' and find out what this 'S' was for and if you had it right you had to run across the road and round the lamp post and back again.

And we used to thread a needle and put a button through it so it was swinging on the cotton and we used to push the needle in the window; then you'd go back a few yards out of sight and swing this cotton so that it would tap on the window and the woman would look out and couldn't make it out. Us used to play marbles

and spinning top - five stones and cigarette cards. Then on the top of Cheeke Street used to come an old I-tye with his organ and he had a little monkey and he always used to dance.

Organ grinder

How about old Slab Dab? He used to say, "Give me a halfpenny, I'm soft. And we used to say, "Say Slab Dab" and he'd go, "Slab dab here, slab dab there, slab dab there, slab dab here, slab dab on the window. Hit me, hit me, I'm soft." And then there was another old man; they used to say he was a Rowntree, din't 'um, out of the asylum, this great big man with the glasses. And the people that was looking after him used to follow him.

What about old Horniman? Used to go round with a case, selling tea, cheap tea it was. Then there was old Sheep's Head Char - she was called Charlotte. She used to go round with a basket on her arm, shoes off her feet, splatter feet, and sell her plants and that. Then there was Bam Chute, big tall fellow and old Freddy Sprague. We used to say to him, "Hullo, Freddy," and he used to say, I got 'en; I got 'en."

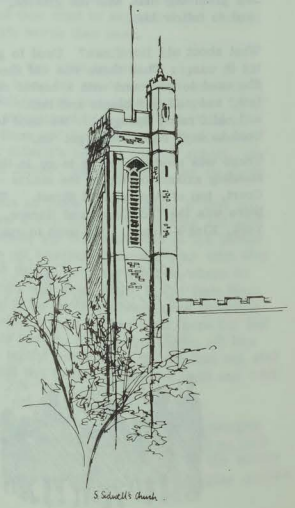
There was nowhere for 'e to go in they days. You use to see people standing around on top of the courts - top of Baker's Court, top of Gatty's Court, top of Summerland Street. There were several pubs in St Sidwell's; there was the Old Coach and Horses, there was the Ackland Arms, Duke of York, King's Head. We used to run through there into the slaughter house.

Us used to get frightened to death when they were bringing the cattle up to be slaughtered; they'd go all over the gardens. "Ooh, quick, the cows is coming up the courtyard!" Then they'd catch 'em and pull them in with the rope, poor devils.

And there was a huge great bonfire the fifth of November down Belmont Road. All the old mattresses used to burn up. We used to say,

"Hark at the bugs cracking." That was all the sticks cracking. Us was hard up they days, us had nothing. Couldn't buy a new bed like you could now and our father, 'e would never have a second hand bed; no matter if us wanted another bed 'e'd never have a second hand bed. Three of us used to get in together in a single bed: one might sleep down the bottom with the feet upwards. Never had eiderdowns then; overcoats used to cover the bed and we'd not want the sleeves or buttons near us. And when one turned over he took all the bedclothes. And we all had to take it in turns wearing this coat. When the shoes was off me feet, I've often pulled off a bit of leather to make 'en even and I was nearly on the ground. Cor dear, it was the good old days, wasn't it? I'd rather have they days.

When we lived down Union Terrace the back of Turner's, a bakers shop, came out to us and when you were going to the toilet there was rats running all over the place. They'd run across your feet while you was on the toilet. Sid used to stand outside the door while mother was on the toilet cos she was afraid to go in 'cos of the rats. My sister was in there sat there on the toilet and a rat ran right across her feet.



There'd be one tap outside, only one cold water tap and often they'd turn the water off and you had no water, did 'e Sid? Used to have a boiler out the back, boil up your clothes, no light or nothing. If you couldn't afford a pint of oil for the lamp you had to have a candle.

When I was married, I was married in St Sidwell's Church on a Boxing Day and my husband's brother-in-law had sprinkled some confetti on my husband's hair. Right, I comes up through, marches up; he gets up and stands by the side of me and the vicar, he was a Welsh man, said, "We are gathered together in the face of this congregation .....GO OUTSIDE AND BRUSH THE CONFETTI OFF YOU. RIGHT OUTSIDE THE CHURCH DOORS." And he went and left me standing! And he wore my

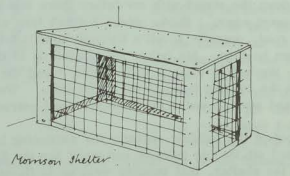
father's medals and he was afraid when us went in the vestry that the vicar was going to look at the names. Anyway when us gets in the vestry he said, "You're smiling now but in twelve months time you'll be taking the rolling pin for her." That was the vicar. Well anyway, afterwards when I got home, I noticed the marriage lines was dated for the 27th; I was married the 26th. Right, back I went over the church and he wasn't there so my marriage lines is dated for the 27th instead of the 26th.

The War in St Sidwell's - One

Mrs. M. Balkwill

Let's go back to May 1st 1942: about that time there was a bomb dropped in Cowick Street and one in Okehampton Street. Everybody was going out of the city into church halls but my husband's mother was sleeping in the fields under a hedge. This worried me so I wrote to my husband: "I'm a bit concerned about your mother: she's sleeping in the fields: she shouldn't do this but she wouldn't listen to me." Anyway he was given 24 hours compassionate leave; it was known as passion leave in the army.

We'd had a raid in Paris Street the beginning of the week and he arrived at half past nine in the evening, had a meal and before he could get to bed, the sirens went. We had to get the kids up: there was my baby, my sister's baby, my mother and my father. So we get them into the table shelter which was a big steel affair like a rabbit hutch with wiring on the side. Inside we had a mattress, a blanket and some pillows, hoping the kids would sleep. Mine never did: she always used to sit up and say, "Wheee, bang!" My mother used to say, "Stop her, May, do stop her. You can't hear what's going on." And when she said you can't hear what's going on you must imagine all hell breaking loose outside the house: bang, crash, wallop - and the bullets hitting the kitchen. My husband said "I've got to go out." Neither of us could get under the shelter: I suffered with claustrophobia and would never get under.



When he got outside the front door, he came back, called me out and said, "We've got to get out: we're the last in the street. If we don't get out now, you know, we're going to be burnt." By this time the planes were still overhead. So we go back and say we've got to get out. He took the two babies and my sister and sent back a little air raid warden: he was only a little short man and he picked my mother up and put her over his shoulder and she kept shouting and screaming, "Put me down, put me down, I haven't got my teeth in." I dunno who she thought was going to look at her with no teeth in 'cos by this time it was what, 12 o'clock, one o'clock in the morning, possibly.

Anyway I was left to take my father down to the shelter. We got my mother's teeth and sent her off on the back of this little air raid warden. My father and I set out to try to go to the shelter; my father had arthritis and walked with two sticks. Outside the front door the incendiary bombs were still burning in the gutter; it was a pure white flame, possibly two foot long and we had to step over these things. It looked as if every house in the street was on fire except ours and next door. As we went down the street the bedroom floors were falling in and crashing everywhere. Right opposite was poor old Mrs Hitchcock's house; through the window - course there was no glass, all blown out - there was her poor old piano: her pride and joy. I'd taken her to the shelter about seven o'clock the night before with all her worldly goods in the push chair. We always used to laugh and say, "Let's take the crown jewels to the shelter." A lot of 'em wouldn't sleep in the street; they were nervous. We used to stay in - if you're going to get bombed you might as well get bombed.

Going down the street with my father there was nobody else in sight. The planes went away, I think, unless I didn't take any notice of them. At the bottom of the road, opposite Kivell's Haulage Yard a telegraph pole snapped in half where it'd been burning. My father got tangled up in the red hot wires; I had to untangle him. We had to make a little detour round the telegraph pole which almost took us into the burning building the other side. We eventually reached the swimming baths and went in under the Denmark Road entrance to the shelter.

The roof of the building opposite the swimming baths was on fire; the building contained all the big rolls of newsprint for the Express and Echo. Once we got in the shelter, that building went up in flames and we couldn't get out. The shelter was packed solid; my sister was dumped up the end of the shelter with two kids in the blankets we'd wrapped them in and we'd sent my husband back to salvage some clothes for them. We didn't see him again till the next morning 'cos he couldn't come back because of the fire of the newsprint. When he did come back he brought a pram load of baby clothes they'd all grown out of! Wasn't much help really.

Eventually I got out of the shelter, possibly about nine o'clock next morning and the Salvation Army were there with cups of tea in big white china mugs and their corn beef sandwiches, about three inches thick - went down lovely. I was worried about mother 'cos I didn't know where she was. Eventually I found her in a shelter in the Triangle with neighbours. And all the neighbours kept saying to me, "May, is my house alright?" "May, is my place O.K.?" And what could I say? You can't say, "No, yours is gone, yours is gone, yours is gone, but ours is alright." How the hell could you? You just said, "Well, you know, we can't really tell 'cos of all the smoke and fire."

I went back to Russell Street where I found my husband had been to the fire brigade who were playing their hoses on some rubble at the bottom of the street, on what was the old dairy and butcher's. He'd fought them for a hose pipe, brought it up and he was up a ladder two doors away pouring water on this house, what was left of it; there was only the ground floor left. Better tell you about the fireman, I suppose: the fireman was called Schofield; he lived in Longbrook Street and he fell off the top of the ladder and as he was disappearing in the flames my husband caught him by his fireman's belt and pulled him out. Never got the V.C. for it but years later I did meet Mr Schofield's wife and she told me about a young soldier who'd pulled her husband out of the flames.

We had a relation who got leave from the Navy in Plymouth to come up and see if we were still alive and he and I went next door, there was only the ground floor left. We walked up over all the smouldering ruins of the staircase with a bucket of water and some floor cloths. I said, "What the hell are we doing here?" He said, "Well you've got to damp it down, else it'll creep back through and your place'll be going up in smoke." So we spent an hour or two putting out the

smouldering ruins. My mother in the meantime, my father and the two babies were taken to my other sister in Heavitree. And we spent the day damping down, trying to clear up. I went up in the attic and thought, "What the hell can I save - it's so hot up here." I picked up two tins of paint and put them out in the yard. Dunno how it helped, but..... We cleaned the brass step to keep mother happy. Now where did we sleep that? Oh, Ken and I slept in the house; we could have gone out but we thought we better stay. The sirens went, but no raid.

But after that we couldn't go back. Ours was the only house in Russell Street with water, because my father was on the water board, but we had no lights, no heating - well, we could have lit a fire! But we had no gas, no electricity, no water that you could drink. They moved most of our people into private homes, billeted, until such time as they had a council place for them. But we went off to Rugby. We had to walk all the way down Hele's School and get a free ticket: tickets were like confetti - nobody paid for anything. And we went off to Rugby at the end of my husband's 24 hour compassionate leave. We never had any passion out of that 24 hours. Actually he was the only one in our family that was injured and he fell in a trench. The doodle bugs were coming over and they had to jump in a trench when the engines cut out. He went to go in a trench and he tripped over a tent rope and broke his ribs. He was our only war wounded.

When the church tower fell in, it was so funny. They said, "We will toll the church bells if the parachutists arrive. And when the bells went, I thought, "Oh, well, they'm here; let 'em come." Nothing could be worse. At that time I didn't see any sense of danger really. I think the younger ones thought, "Well if it's coming it'll come." Live for the day - so many of our friends had been killed. One of the women, Mrs Selly of Newtown, she was coming down to the shelter and she got shot up and this is the sort of thing you accepted like you do with Northern Ireland now. When you hear something in Northern Ireland it's just one of those things, you know.

I remember an earlier raid too when my husband was home: I was cleaning mother's brass doorstep and there was a warning about 10 o'clock. The sirens went and I picked up Carol and put her in the table shelter and got my father out of bed. There was a blacksmith's at the top of our road and he was shoeing a horse and the horse went galloping down our street. And my brave, intrepid soldier husband, instead of going to rescue his mother-in-law who'd gone shopping, went chasing down the road after the ruddy horse. And I looked up and this plane was over Sampson's Pit, where the sport's field is, and I saw him drop a bomb over there. And I thought, "Oh, it's a raid." He turned on the Triangle and he came right up the back of our house with all his machine guns shooting right and left. Then into Belgrave Road which is on an angle to Russell Street.

In the attic of one of the houses there, one woman had an eiderdown drying and he shot right through this and the place was full of feathers. I left my father with Carol and went up Hammett's Dairy to see where me Mum was. As I was going up through Cheeke Street I turned round and I saw this pilot bailing out down over the estuary; I hoped he dropped in the sea. When I got to Hammett's Dairy, I said, "Where's me mother?" A trap door opened up from the floor and my mother's little head came up, "Ooh," she said, "Ooh, my god, May, i'n't this awful?" I think we got our two penn'orth of corn beef and our half a round of sausages. That was another daylight raid.

FIRE WATCHING

You had one fire watcher who was responsible for the street; he came along with his rota and said, "Look, you're on Thursday night." And so on. I was out there one night with this little man and my next door neighbour. The sirens had gone; the searchlights were on up at the airport and the old bombers going zoom, zoom, zoom. We always knew when it was a German one: I don't know why - they seemed to be heavier engines and be slow. They'd go zo-om, zo-om, zo-om. We were watching the searchlights and suddenly the gun at the airport opens up. I thought, "Oh, they're shooting." I watched the shells explode and when I turned round I was the only one left in the street.

Our fire fighting equipment was ridiculous. You had a bucket of water for the brave, intrepid fire fighter that was going to be at the end of the hose. And we had what is known as a stirrup pump and it fitted over the bucket. The intrepid fire fighter was supposed to lie prone and hold the hose pipe over his head and sprinkle the incendiary bomb while the rest of the gang filled the bucket up with a chain of water. One doing the pumping, one on the end of the hose and the rest of the gang kept the bucket filled - about five on a crew with luck.

The fact that these incendiary bombs came down in hundreds they hadn't coped for. We were told not to put a jet on the incendiary 'cos it would explode. You had to spray it to keep it under control. You were issued with an ordinary shovel that you used to put coal on the fire and a broom handle. If an incendiary fell through the roof, you were supposed to go in this room, always presuming that it hadn't set fire to the room and shovel up this thing. According to their theory it would just be lying on the floor, shooting out a flame but not setting fire to anything. You just had to crawl into the room on your knees, shovel it up, carry it through the house, put it in this bucket of sand and spray it with yer little stirrup pump, with a tin hat on which had F.W. on for fire watcher. If they got caught in the eaves of the house, you were supposed to go to the highest room in the house, lean out of the window and unhitch it. In the meantime all the heavy artillery is coming: kaboom,

wallop: all the H.E. bombs falling all around while you're fiddling around trying to get this one little incendiary off the roof.

The incendiary bomb itself was about two foot long, maybe longer, with this great flame on the end: we'd never seen one up to then. Not at all the old idea of a little round thing marked 'bomb' with a fuse on the end which we thought of. We were always told - I don't know where it came from I'm sure, but it must have been the Ministry of Information, the Min. of In., who gave out such rubbish - we were told that the third bomb that went off you were alright; you knew it had missed you. They said you wouldn't hear the one that hit you: so when these heavy explosive bombs came down, you used to go, "One, two... three... Well, that's that, it's missed me." But when you went to the cinema and saw these newsreels, the bomb bays opened out and the bombs just showered down.

The War in St Sidwell's - Two

Mrs. E. Dolman

My husband was sent to Carlisle for his job and he was guaranteed to be there for three years. I arrived there the last Saturday in August and war was declared on September 3rd. So the next day he was sent right back to Taunton and I was left in Carlisle. After a time he managed to get me some lodgings to come down to Taunton and I stayed there for a while. Then I thought I might as well go back home and start a home for my children. I went in one room in Oxford Road first; then I managed to get a flat, two room over in Verney Place.

Course the war was on but nobody ever thought it would come to Exeter - we really didn't think it would hit us. But I always used to keep everything all packed up in a bag so on the night of the big blitz when the siren went, I just snatched me bag with me ration books and the children's clothes in and ran up the road. There used to be a Co-op on the corner of Verney Place and you used to have to go down over the flight of steps and go underground; they used to have like an underground cellar and we used to go down there. Then of course they really started bombing. They set fire first to the Co-op and there must have been barrels of sugar up over because when the bomb dropped there were these barrels rolling down over. Everybody got in a panic but I held my children back because I'd read so much about people racing to an exit and getting crushed. Me and my friend Nell with her two children, we stayed back. We said, "Alright, let 'em go." But a bomb dropped and I think it shut a great many in the exit. Anyway, we didn't know how to get out 'cos all these barrels of burning stuff had come down into the shelter. They were all right the other side 'cos they were able to run up the other way. Anyway, P.C. Barrett come down and he saw we were trapped both sides so he said, "Now you stand there and throw the children." And you know he caught all five of them. We had to pick 'em up and throw them over the barrels of burning stuff and he caught 'em. I could no more tell you how we got over or around that fire.....never....my mind is a complete blank to that.

Anyway, we went to run across the road to the Odeon to get in behind where they had the big pillars - it was the only place we had to run. My oldest son, he lost his shoe and running up through in all that broken glass I thought, "Oh my, his foot. It'll be cut to smithereens." We met this young boy who lived just near us - he was worried 'cos his mother and the rest of the family were in this street shelter in the main road. And all of a sudden he fell on the three children and me and layed on top of us. I didn't know that they were flying low and machine gunning the street and I honestly believe if it hadn't been for him we should have caught the fire: I think I should have walked right into it, not knowing what they was doing. Anyway we got in behind the Odeon. I had on a pair of black suede shoes and they were cut to smithereens and yet my Roy had one shoe on and one shoe off and he never had one mark on his foot.

Now just before all this, we'd queued up to watch Laurel and Hardy down where the old Hippodrome used to be. In the film they were supposed to be dying and 'e was trying to get this drink up to his mouth, sort of holding onto the end of his tie and trying to get the drink up. Well after the all clear went Mr Hicks, the butcher and all they, put us in the church where they had camp beds layed down where we could lay the children. Our homes were gone; we never had nothing; they destroyed the lot. I suppose after it all I was shaking, so Mr Hicks gave me a drink of water. And could I get that cup up? Course Laurel and Hardy come back to me and I just stood there and I roared. Course he thought I was hysterical really. Then I said, "Don't worry, Mr Hicks, it's just a funny film that us have seen. He shook so much that he couldn't get the drink up and now me." It was so funny.

Course Sidwell Street was flattened; the Bristol Inn was gone, Old Coach and Horses, New Coach and Horse, the Acland, everything. There was one man I felt very sorry for, Fungo Morelli: I know he was an Italian but he'd been here a long, long time; he used to keep an icecream business and a little restaurant in Summerland Street. I really was upset when I heard that they'd interned him. He was such a nice man. We were all upset; I don't think 'e would have done anything.

Sidwell Street after the Exeter raid

Then we had to go and get our army pension 'cos we didn't have any homes to go to; luckily I 'ad me bag with me pension book. Then my friend that lived down below and her mother and children went back up country. And I thought the only place I can go is down to Barnstaple, so I'd be near him. Of course at Barnstaple they could see that there was something going on and 'e asked the postman where was the bombing and of course he said Exeter. Course my husband got permission and got a train, but they could only bring 'im so far and then he had to walk. Well of course I was on my way going to Barnstaple, and me husband was in a dead panic, wasn't 'e? 'E couldn't find me and of course 'e saw Verney Place destroyed. 'E went everywhere. They said I'd gone to a church and he went to the wrong church. So you can imagine what condition he was like. 'E come back to where 'e was based, Iddesford I think it was.

Well by that time I'd got to Barnstaple and the people that looked after you sent a telegram to the camp so 'e got to the camp to find I was alright. Anyway by the time 'e got there they'd put me in these billets. Oh my, it was terrible and there was only this old man. I thought, "I can't stay here with my children." So I walked up and down the street and asked of them if there was anybody who could put me up for the night. Then I met this lady and she said, "No." Then they ran after me and brought me back and she said, "Look, my daughter is staying with me with her children. Her house is empty. You and the children go to her house." They opened it up and do you know they went all round to everybody: one gave me a couple of buckets of coal, the baker across the road, 'e brought cakes - they did everything for us. I thought it was wonderful really.

Anyway when my husband come 'e went to the billeting and he said, "The condition that you put my wife in wouldn't suit anybody. I want a different place for her. If you can't get it, then I'll have to see the army." The officer at the camp told him they would put me up in a tent for the time being. But as luck should 'ave it they'd opened up a pub in Collins Road next door to the Police Station for blitzed out people, or people that was evacuated from London. And I was on this floor with a London woman and she had five children and two rooms; I had three children in two rooms - one kitchen and yet we got on just like that. We never had an angry word and all the children agreed. Course the army were very good: they helped out with sheets and all that; granted me a thing to go and get sheets from a shop. Course my husband was sent away into Germany and France.

Then a notice came out from Exeter that all Exeter people should put in an application to return to Exeter again. I had a sister lived up Buddle Lane and I said to her, "That's the little cottage I would like" - where the medical health centre is now in Cowick Street. "That's the little one I would like". And do you know it's the one they allocated me! I couldn't believe it.

I've never gone up there since, not to go right up to the Fountain. I don't know what it's like up there now really.

Sidwell Street 1977

BACK NUMBERS AVAILABLE FROM: Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road Exeter
plus 15p P & P a set

OR: GO TO CASTLES BOOKSHOP GANDY STREET EXETER

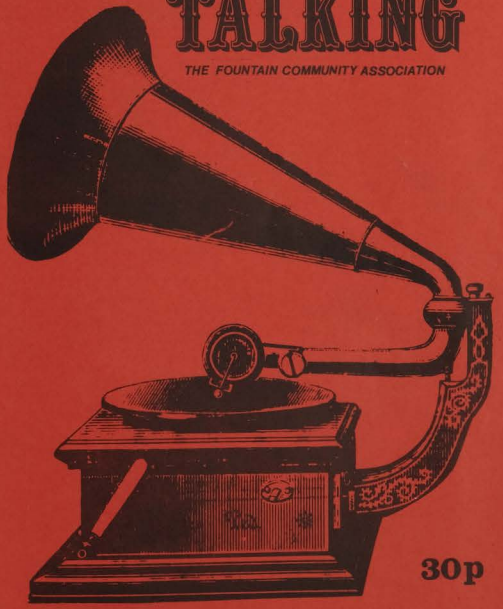
VOLUME 4	The West Quarter	12p
VOLUME 5	Carnivals	12p
VOLUME 6	Working Childhoods in Waterbear & Preston Streets	12p

DEVON LIBRARY WSL SERVICES

Volume 8

PEOPLE TALKING

THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



30p

PEOPLE TALKING

We move to a new area: Bartholomew Street and the Mint. Old St. Sidwell's was destroyed by bombs, this area by urban blight. Residents have been driven out by noise and firms have moved to new trading estates leaving dereliction behind.

This issue looks back to a time when the area was in "full spate". We range from 1891 up to the immediate post World War Two period. These accounts are all personal memories, and this isn't a complete history of the area. I'm sure we'll return here in a future issue.

Jenny Lloyd

Jenny Lloyd
52 Belmont Road.
Exeter

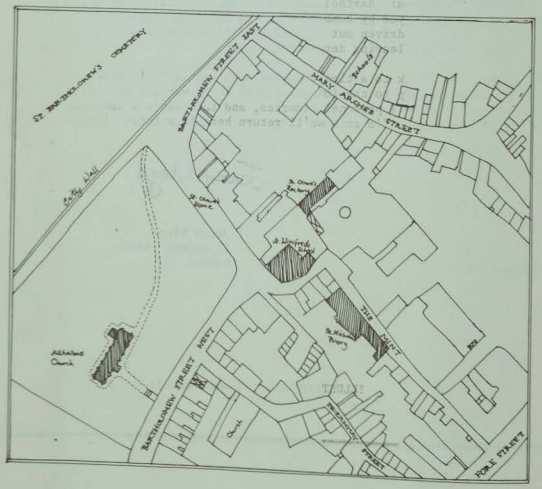
December 1977

ILLUSTRATIONS: Clawson Morris

PUBLISHED BY
CASTLES BOOKSHOP
28 GANDY STREET
EXETER.

BARTHOLEMEW STREET

& THE MINT



The Twenties & Thirties

MRS V.M. DEAN

We were brought up in Bartholomew Street, in Hurtford Place - it was like a tenement place. You'd go under this archway and there was a doorway to the right and to the left three storey flats. In the yard they had two little cottages on the left but all the way round the yard was cottages: there was Granny Snow, Mrs. Balsall and her son and in the corner was somebody called Mrs. Lear who had a daughter called Ivy. And next to there was three toilets and they had a tap coming up on a lead pipe outside the wash house.

Now around Bartholomew Street there was Hurtford Place and then on the corner was Brays and all along there till you got to Mary Arches Street was houses. And between the houses was another alleyway where there was more cottages. And up Mary Arches Street was a lot more cottages. And there was always people. In Friernhay Street which was at the back of the Mint was another block of cottages and every cottage had lots of children.

Mother died when I was thirteen and I looked after a family of five when I was nine. Father made a box for me to stand up to the copper so I could scrub the clothes. Neighbours helped but they couldn't help all that much 'cos they had families to bring up. You see they all had four, five children. We were lucky: my mother only had three of us. My mother was an invalid for three years before she died. She started to be ill when she was 39 and died when she was 42.

When we were in Hurtford Place we used to play in the cemetary. There were the catacombes: we didn't know what catacombes were actually and we used to play down there when the park keeper went away. There were iron gates but we could go in underneath.

There were sort of shelves in there and when we used to shout, it used to echo. And then on the corner of the cemetary they used to have bonfires there bonfire night. In the other part of the cemetary there used to be a beautiful church - I think it was called Allhallows Church and we used to go up there picking buttercups.

SCHOOL

I was born in 1924 and I went to school when I was four. We used to go to school in Mary Arches. My Granny used to live up Mary Arches and I remember we used to dive into Granny's before we went home, for a piece of bread and margarine with brown sugar on. There was a teacher called Miss Glyn and she used to have a motor bike. She had a friend who was another teacher and they used to wear leather hats like an old fashioned pilot's hat. We used to think them the cat's whiskers: for women to ride a motor bike, that was something, that was, 'cos it was something to see a motor car - it was all horse and carts.

And there was Miss Sally Webber. She was the headmistress and she was strict as anything. But she was a fantastic teacher. Funnily enough when I went to live up at the Precinct after my son was born and he was born in 1956; after he went to school I was walking along the by-pass and somebody shouted to me behind my back, "Vera Martin!" And I turned automatically right around and said, 'Yes, Miss Webber'. And it was my old headmistress.

Very strict discipline in that school: you wouldn't dare be late; you wouldn't dare answer back. If you were late you had to stand by the side of the class so that all the children could see you. And you knew you were going to have the cane for being late.

We had curtains to divide the classroom. It was a big classroom in the senior part of the school and probably we were doing sums - it wasn't called maths then. Miss Webber used to teach the senior girls and she would say, "What's three nines?" "What's ten fours?" And if you didn't know the answer, the answer you didn't know you had to write out fifty times to make sure you knew it. So always when we were going to have sums with Miss Webber we'd always swat up our times tables. But while we were there doing sums, behind the other curtain there was somebody either talking geography or having singing lessons. So you were trying not to hum the tune they were singing and trying to add up.

It was freezing cold sometimes but the teachers always used to stand in front of the fire lifting their skirts up at the back and there was we sat freezing. And we used to take our milk money with us. We used to have a mug of milk and it had malt in it and it was horrid; we used to have to pay for that. My mother used to say, "You've got to drink it", and we'd take our halfpennies to pay for it. Course there were lots of children that didn't have it - we were lucky really.

But when my mother was ill I was allowed to go to school half an hour late in the morning and go home half an hour early in the evening. I used to have special homework to do to make up for it. Miss Webber used to help me with my work a lot, 'cos she knew my Dad and she knew I couldn't come to school so much. I never missed school but I was never there as long in the day.

I left Mary Arches 'cos they changed it to an infants' school, so I left there in the middle of my school days and I went to Episcopal School - that was nice but it wasn't the same. That was a posh school 'cos they had a gym and you had a classroom for every lesson and you had cookery lessons. When we were at Mary Arches School we had to do Housewifery, as it was called. We used to have to go down to Holloway Street School because they had a sort of a kitchen in there: all these girls from different schools that didn't have any kitchens used to go down there. And also, down Northernhay Street there was a big house and it had a garden and we used to have to go there to learn housewifery. We'd be there all the time to learn how to run a house: you used to have a dolly in a pram and they used to put mustard on the dolly's bottom and we used to have to bath it and change its nappy.

And there used to be the Mint School - that was for boys and that was a sort of technical school and there was St. Wilfred's and St. Nicholas School, a Catholic school.

THE MINT

Well, we left Bartholomew Street and we went to live in the Mint. We had a house in the Mint. The first house we went into we had four rooms; in the second house we went into we had the whole house. When we were in the first house there were six rooms altogether and we had the four bottom rooms. Through the passage and out behind there was a cottage and in the corner was a wash house. And in that cottage I remember a man and he was a soldier in the cavalry; he was called Mr. Bartlett. He had some sons and I used to help him polish his spurs. And I always used to wonder, "Why does he bandage his legs up?" until my father told me it was called puttees. He looked super he did, Mr. Bartlett. Then when I went out for a drink only last year, up to the Pack Horse Inn, there was this man sat in a corner and he had ear rings and gold rings on his fingers. We were talking and said, "You weren't born here". And I said, "I was born in Bartholomew Street and I lived in the Mint".

'What number in the Mint did you live"?
"I lived in number five first".
"You didn't, did you?"
"Yes I did".
He said, "How far back can you remember?" And I told him about this soldier and he said, "And I was that soldier". And that's him, Jock Bartlett.

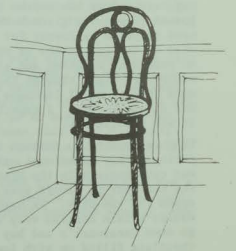
And then on Sundays we used to go to church. At the top of the Mint is the vicarage. Father Long used to be the vicar. There were two big double doors and inside there was a mulberry tree. They used to have a tennis court and a drive that went around and in the middle was a fish pond. We used to go up there and we used to take these mulberries off the tree. But you couldn't sneak in very often 'cos the doors used to creak, these great big doors: they used to have a round iron ring through a handle and you'd turn this and creep in. Well, on the left hand side was a high hedge and at the end of the hedge was the start of the drive and there was the mulberry tree so you had about ten to fifteen yards to get from that hedge to get behind this mulberry tree. But if Father Long ever caught you, woe betide - he'd make you do penance or something.

In the Mint was a shop and there was a little old lady and her name was called Miss Gregory. She used to have a long black dress and big button boots. I used to wear high button boots and a white cotton overall with

lace with a handkerchief pinned to shoulder. This lady, Miss Gregory, used to make corsets. And it used to fascinate me 'cos she had this dummy and it had an hour-glass figure. But we always used to wonder how their bottoms used to stick out; this Miss Gregory's bottom used to stick out and we never knew it was called a bustle.

Then there was Mrs. Tapp who lived in Hurtford Place and when Miss Gregory gave up the shop then Mr. and Mrs. Tapp went into the Mint Shop. And they opened it up as a sweet shop and a grocery shop. They were nice people Mr. and Mrs. Tapp and she used to make apple dumplings and sell them. You've seen the old adverts of Bisto Kids, well, you'd go past her shop and you could smell these apple dumplings; she'd have them on a tray just inside the door. Whether she used to put them just inside the door to make our mouth water to ask our mums to go in and buy one I don't know.

It didn't matter if you ever ran out of anything, mother would say "Now take this money and go in Mrs. Tapp's". And it could be ten o'clock at night; it could be a Sunday morning; it could be a morning before they opened, they always opened the back door and they always served you. You don't see that now: if you go in a shop even half an hour before they close, they're either cleaning the bacon thing or they can't serve you because the cheese slicer's being cleaned; if you go in a supermarket, you're running around doing all the work. But we used to go in the shops and there used to be chairs next to the counter and you'd read your list. And in front of the counters in the grocery shops they used to have tins of biscuits with lids on and you used to ask for half a pound of mixed biscuits and "put in lots of cream ones, please". Now I remember that you wouldn't dream of buying any cheese unless you had a taste. Well, when my Mum couldn't do the shopping any more I used to go and get some tastes at the shop. Mum used to say, "Go and bring home some tastes". I used to like mild cheese - Mum and Dad used to say that I liked soap to eat. And I used to go up and say, "Please could Mum have some tastes of cheese". And he used to put all these little bits of cheese wrapped in paper with the name of them there and I'd bring it home and she would taste and say, "I'll have a pound of that or a quarter of that". And I'd take it back and get it.



Down South Street there used to be a pork shop called Patches. My Dad used to like pork - the fathers of the families always used to have a little bit more than the others. And I used to go there with two shillings and Mum would say, "And don't you dare get more than two shillings". And I'd always get the middle cut of the leg. And you used to have what you called gribbles: for about a penny you'd get a great big bag full and you used to take them home and mother would put them in the oven and she'd get a nice lot of pork fat out of that. Then we used to eat the gribbles after - that used to be little perks for us.

Saturdays we used to go shopping 'cos that was always the best buys. And every Saturday when we did the shopping the shopkeepers would give the kiddies balloons with their names on. I used to go with my Mum and we'd go into Liptons and they used to have stacks of butter, all different colours, and this assistant used to have butter boards like cricket bats and pat it. You chose which butter you wanted and he'd pick it up and pat it into all different shapes. And it used always to fit the glass dish on Sunday. We used to go from Liptons across the road to Perks' to do a bit more shopping, then we used to go into the market. They used to sell eggs for 3d a dozen and cream for so much a quarter. But in front of the market facing out onto the path was a tallish, fat man with a walking stick and he had a calliper on his leg and he used to sell sweets. But what used to fascinate my sister and I: you could buy drinks from him and he had what looked like a big glass bubble. You used to pay a halfpenny for this. You used to ask for yellow or orange and he'd do something or other and all the gas would fizz right through this bubble and make this glass of lemonade all fizzy. Cor it was lovely; I expect we'd think it was rubbish now.

The Indoor Market

Then we used to go through the market down into Casalucci's, the icecream parlour. Now Casalucci was one of the nicest men that I ever knew and he was our landlord in the Mint. On Mondays when Casalucci used to come over for the rent he always used to bring over a little metal bucket full of ice-cream for the kids. We used to think he was the cat's whiskers. He couldn't talk English very well, he was Italian. And Saturdays we used to go down Casalucci's and buy a North Pole which was a long thing with chocolate filled up with icecream. Then we used to go into Stilman's

which was off South Street. When it was time for the shops to be shut they'd start auctioning off the meat. Course if mother said we'd have beef this week we'd have bits of beef and bones and suet and all sorts of things. Then we'd go over and get a threepennyworth of mixed vegetables and "don't put in too many potatoes": a parsnip and a couple of swedes and carrots, and we could pick two onions; I suppose because some people didn't like onions so we used to pick them out. They used to have people in the streets with big tall baskets about waist high with a great big handle and they used to pick them up and carry them. I used to think that this basket was full, but it wasn't: it was hollow so far down and at the back, that was where they used to keep their paper bags. The produce was all paid out on the top.

My sister didn't like the pictures very much, but my Mum and Dad did. So when my father and mother finished their paper round we would go out. Dad had a job in the factory in Bonhay Road. He worked for Parkins; it was an iron foundry. He was a core maker, my father was. He always used to say that he made nothing: what he used to make they used to knock away. When he used to come home from work every night, he used to go on his paper round. He used to walk all up Longbrook Street, up Pennsylvania, right to the top and down the lane which came out in Cowley Bridge and then he'd walk back and come home about half past nine. And before Dad came home we used to go down to the pub in the Mint and buy a jug of beer and get it on the table ready for Dad and he'd come home and have it with his cheese and bread.

Mum and I used to go to the Hippodrome and I remember we used to go up through like a fire escape, right up in the gods for about threepence. I can't remember the names of the people that used to be on the bills but we used to have a good old singsong. And then when we came out there'd be sweet vendors and all the shops were open. Today once the shops are closed the city's dead but it didn't used to be before the war it was all alive with people every night of the week. You weren't afraid to let the kiddies out.

We were brought up in Fore Street. We used to play around the shops and we used to know the policemen. The Policemen back then, all they had to say was, "I'll cuff you under the ear" and you wouldn't do it. We used to respect them you know. There was a P.C. Barrett - he was good, he was. You'd run a mile from him and yet you'd always go to him if you wanted anything. We used to see the police a lot because they used to patrol up the Mint for the kiddies to cross the road. Mother used to give them a cup of tea before they went off duty and before six in the morning.

And I remember various aunties and neighbours used to congregate in Mum's house 'cos she was always having cups of tea for people and my Gran used to tell fortunes. Well, by the side of the market somebody used to live

there who was a booky. And they used to say to me, "Take this money with this note", and there was never a name on it, always a funny nom de plume, "But if you see a policeman on that corner, don't you dare go down there". It was against the law, you see, you weren't allowed to do that. We used to go up to the corner of Milk Street and if we didn't see a policeman around we used to put this in the door and run like mad. And we'd collect any winnings.

I can remember my mother used to have these bags of flour and she used to make cakes for different people and there was always a taster for us. I remember some of the women that used to work for different places like Pearces and they used to bring home clothes which they used to probably tuck under their skirts and they'd bring them home for the children. You don't even see a kiddy around today with no shoes, do you? It's a different environment altogether.

Christmas time we used to go up and buy a chicken but there were a lot of people who were lucky to have rabbits. I remember my Dad used to get rabbits and let some of the people have them who didn't have chickens. We were lucky, we always had nice toys and that. And then we used to save farthings. We wouldn't dare spend a farthing 'cos father used to tell us that for every farthing it would buy a breakfast for a poor person. So we used to save these farthings and we used to take them to the Express and Echo and the Express and Echo used to hand them over to the farthing breakfast. And then in the paper would be our names, my sister Audrey and me, Vera, gave a hundred farthings. And then that hundred farthings would go to the farthing breakfast and that was down the bottom of Westcott Slip - they've altered it all so that now I don't know where I am - there used to be a place under the old city wall. And there's children that used to go down there and we couldn't believe it, my sister and I. And my father said to us one day, "You don't know how lucky you are". And of course we didn't know, so he took us down there one day and we saw all these children. To us it seemed like hundreds but whether it was or no, I don't know. And they had a mug of cocoa and a bun and that was their breakfast. I've seen girls with hobnail boots with no socks and a thin little dress and boys with no hair, all waiting for this farthing breakfast. And I thought, "My golly, fancy having to do that". But there was children who had to do it. I suppose the people who lived in the Mint, we were all lucky.

And Voting - now voting when we were kids, our mothers and fathers said to us, "Now you're going to take these placards out and you're going to shout: Vote, Vote for Mr. Whoever it was". We used to run up and down the roads and tell people to vote and then we used to make sure that all the people had their little red things on and we used to follow the horse and carts, sometimes it was cars. And we'd go out with our placards, red or yellow or blue and the people with the yellow wouldn't dare come over your border. And you'd have Labour written over it or Tory; well we wouldn't have tories around here - that is nonsensical you know. There might have been a few liberals that thought they were the upper crust. I remember mother and father waiting up to see the results. Nine times out of ten the tories got in which was a bad day for the workers, still is now come to that. But this is what it used to be election days; we used to have a lot of fun.

The tories lived around Pennsylvania and places like that. My father used to do the paper rounds up there and they were the most stuck up, most meanest people that ever walked this earth, 'cos they used to get their servants from our schools. A lot of the parents couldn't afford to put their children to a trade. A lot of them used to have what you call help from charity. We were lucky, we didn't have it, but we were always told we were lucky. There were some people, who used to have these charities and they used to go into Pinnager's at the bottom of the Mint and they were given a ticket to go and buy the servants' uniforms - you couldn't go out and buy a nice pair of shoes. And you were supposed to be lucky if you were put out in service. They'd go into service in these big houses in Pennsylvania. And in Pinnager's I can remember some of the people up in the corner where they used to sell these servants' clothes and I was determined not to be there. My mother used to say to me "Don't you ever go in and do that. Don't you ever go and have to wash dishes and scrub somebody else's floor; it's bad enough scrubbing your own". And I was determined never to. But it never crossed my mind to do that 'cos me brother was put to a trade and the war came and I didn't go in the Services 'cos I had to look after my Dad who was in munitions; my younger sister went to Okehampton with my aunty.

But Ackroyd's, which was Pinnager's, oh that was a fantastic shop. They used to have all these beautiful hats - we used to think they were beautiful - all piled up high on the side of the counter. If you wanted one they used to have a sort of a long pole with a thing with a claw on the end and if you wanted the fourth one down they'd pick them up and move them and they never used to drop them. But the most expensive ones used to be in the window on a long stick. And they used to have big glass windows and polished wood with all gold writing on and the brass used to shine like gold. And they used to have this Lampstone Rapid thing where

they put the money. The cash desk was on a stage and they'd put the money in this thing and pull something and it used to shoot all up to the cash desk and they'd put the change in. I used to stay in that shop for hours.

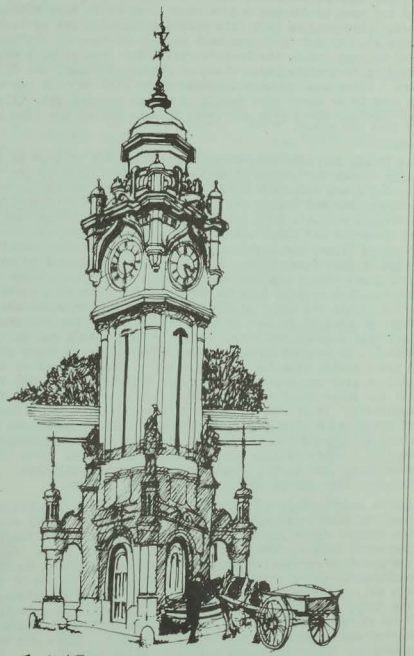
And sometimes outside they'd have all these hats in a box and you could help yourself to them; just plain straw hats but you could get them and dress them up yourself. 'Cos always at Easter you bought an Easter bonnet - that was the beginning of summer and we used to go to Pinnager's. The bonnets were always with a high brim and a ribbon and we'd have white ankle socks with black patent ankle strap shoes and we used to put vaseline on them to stop them from cracking. And we'd wear our bonnets Easter Sunday to church and then of course there was always the fair and we always used to end up walking down by the river. We used to wear our Sunday best only on Sunday and Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

WEEKENDS

When we used to have baths we didn't have a bathroom but we had a wash house at the bottom of the yard, so Friday nights or Saturday nights we used to have this bath. We'd go down to the copper and bring the hot water up in buckets to the bath in front of the range, just an ordinary zinc bath with handles each end - it used to hang on the wall. We used to go into the front room and "sit quiet and don't touch anything" 'cos the front room was holier than thou, while my brother had a bath and he would get his pyjamas on and go in the front room while we'd have our baths; then he'd come in and we'd all have a dose of syrup of figs to make your bowels work for the weekend. And this was a ritual you know.

Saturday mornings in the summer we used to go down Bonhay Road and go down Head Weir. There was a man called Mr. Hutchings who used to be one of the attendants there and after he left he opened up a fish and chip shop in Alphington Road, then he left there when they pulled it down and moved somewhere else. But Mr. Hutchings was there at Head Weir, and you used to go in for nothing Saturday mornings, that's why we used to go down there. My brother used to go down as well 'cos we were all swimmers in our family. And I remember when I was three and couldn't swim my brother threw me in the river: I can remember going under the water and I swam. And I've been able to swim ever since. But we used to go down there for training. My brother and Mr. Hutchings and some brother called Underhill that used to live near King Street, down Westcott Slip somewhere, used to train for the life saving.

Then I used to go swimming in the swimming baths; it must have been near where Curry's is now. We used to go up a lane and through the double doors and there was a cash desk. The bath was 25 yards long; it had a balcony and huts either side but in each corner they had a big room for boys and girls - they never had a hut. And they held the regatta there. And when they had regattas down at Port Royal we used to go in for them. And then we used to go in for long distance swimming: we used to swim from Port Royal to Double Locks.



The Clock Tower

And I'll tell you what else we used to do Saturdays: if it was nice and all our chores were done, Mum used to make us up a bottle of lemonade and cut some sandwiches and we used to go up to Bury Meadow. And in Bury Meadow they used to have this drinking fountain and we used to play up there all day and we'd come back and go all through the coal yard which used to come out in St. David's Hill. But look at Bury Meadow now: the drinking fountain's gone. Look at the clock tower: the drinking fountain's gone - there used to be a fountain there with an iron cup on an iron chain. It used to be about five pounds in weight to pick this flipping iron cup up. You see there were all these troughs around the town for horses.

And Sunday mornings when we got up mother used to send me down to Seaton's Dairy - down the bottom of Bartholomew Street just by the iron bridge where the Crown and Sceptre Pub is, well it was just on the corner. It was run by a brother and sister and mother used to send me down for a quarter pound of cream, and we'd take our dish and this Miss Seaton used to put that dish on the scale and weigh the dish and then she'd put the cream in and I used to think "I bet she hasn't put in all the cream that should be". But she'd weigh it just dead right. And when the milkman used to call he used to come round with a big can and he used to have pint things with a hook on the end that used to hang on the outside of the can, pints and halves and gills. Then the baker at the bottom of the Mint which was called Hills then: we used to go down in the morning to ask for two pennyworth of yesterday's cakes and buns. And we'd say, "Don't put in too many bread rolls". If you had the money you could buy seven fancy cakes for sixpence - you'd always have one over, you know. There's lots of things that they used to give you extra. You know at Christmas time when you go round to all the shops which you patronised all through the year, they'd give you something. If it was a baker's shop they'd give you a couple of loaves of bread and a nice cake for Christmas; if it was in the butcher's, they would give you a couple of extra chops or a pound of sausages; if you went in a grocer's shop they would give you, say, three or four oranges or something, just to say 'thank you' for patronising them. But you don't see it now; they expect you to give to them.

And we used to have a lido where we used to hire out boats on the river Exe. We used to go down to the river Exe every Sunday afternoon and feed the swans. And right by the old Exe Bridge were all the rows of boats that you could hire out and go up and down the river with. And you'd see all the families out Sunday afternoons walking the canal banks. And once I remember there were some aeroplanes down there in one of the fields. I was very young and my father let me go up in an aeroplane and it looped the loop; I thought I was the cat's whiskers. He gave my sister sixpence 'cos she didn't want to go up. That was going back years ago when my mother was walking, before she was ever ill. There was always something going on; there was never nights in being bored.

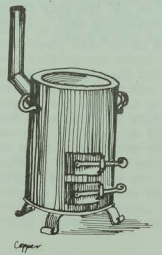
I remember the trams. There were some boys that used to come from somewhere and they used to put some halfpennies in the tram lines and if the trams went over them the right way they could come out the size of a penny and they'd put them in the slot machines and buy a bar of Nestles chocolates. Course if the tram didn't go right it would spoil the halfpenny and you couldn't spend it in any case. And then there used to be a man called Taffy Fulford that used to come along with sweets - we used to think it fantastic. We used to give him jam jars for the sweets.

Now you could go into Mary Arches School two ways: there was an entrance in Mary Arches Street and one in Garden Square. Garden Square was full of cottages with little postage stamp gardens in front with little railings. And I remember when we had a halfpenny given us we used to come out of school, specially on a Friday, and go down Garden Square and turn to the left. There was a baker's shop and if you went in there you could ask for a halfpenny bag of waste and it used to be all waste of ginger snaps. You used to spend your halfpennies a farthing at a time: you could have a farthing's worth of so much and a farthing's worth of something else.

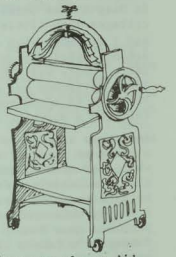
And there used to be a fish and chip shop down there and you used to get a piece of fish and a pennyworth of chips and a pennyworth of peas. The whole lot used to come to about threepence or fourpence. And there was also a workman's cafe at the top of North Street, The British Workmen, and we used to go in there with a basin and mother would give us sixpence - on a Monday this used to be, wash day. It was nearly always meat and boiled potatoes on a Monday for dinner. If we didn't have any meat left over from Sunday we'd take a big bowl and a cloth for sixpennyworth of beef and gravy.

WASH DAY

Each house had its own wash house and we used to get all the rubbish, cardboard boxes and things from Tapp's, the shop, and save our own boxes and paper and then always Sunday nights we would go down and fill the copper. Course there was never such a thing as Persil and Tide; I think we used to have a wash powder called Rinso, but mother used to have this soap and grate it and she'd also put handfuls of soda in the copper that used to be filled on Sunday night. Then all the whites were put in this copper with the soda and the soap. Then the fire was laid. Well then, early Monday morning, as early as four or five o'clock, up mother would get. And I remember as though it were yesterday, she used to say, "Dear God, don't let it rain". She'd get up, light the fire and once it was going, put coal in it. But if the wind was in the wrong direction the fire wouldn't light and the smoke would blow down and all the smut would go over everything.


Copper

On the top of the copper was a great big wooden lid with a great big handle and in under the handle you used to keep your poking stick. Then you used to wait for the clothes to boil and pick them out in a dipping bowl. It was a round bowl, the same sort of zinc as the bath, with a handle on. You used to dip the water out to put in your bath that you were doing your washing in. And you'd have another bowl and dip your sheets in this bowl and cart it over to the bath and scrub it. I've still got my mother's scrubbing board now - it's only a plank of wood. Then there was a bath outside the wash house under the tap on the wall and you'd let the water run and that was running all the time.



The whites were scrubbed, then boiled, then rinsed, then blued and it was put through the mangle every time. But that's what used to happen 'cos I've done it. And we starched what had to be starched. I remember my father used to wear dicky fronts and they were like a baby's bib - they used to do up with a tape at the back. Mother had the same ones as his shirt so that if his shirt got dirty he could put this bib on and put another clean collar on. So actually they probably used one shirt all week with lots of little bibs and collars.

The coloureds were done afterwards in the copper. I remember once, I'll never forget it: I had a red, velvet sleeved dress and it had a white lacey collar and white cuffs. And it was a Monday 'cos you always did washing on a Monday, never on any other day. And I came home from school and I went into the wash house - this was when we lived at number five - and mother was in the kitchen getting dinner. There was the washing bubbling away and piles of all the different clothes on the floor. I remember I picked up my red dress and I thought, "I'll help Mum" and I put it in the copper with all the sheets. And everything was pink and the only thing my mother was worried about was 'Whatever will the neighbours say!" I remember I had the cane on my back-side and I never sat down for a month.

THE WEST QUARTER

The West Quarter was another world. You would cross the road to Kings Street and go right across to Rack Street. We used to call friends of our mother, aunties back in those days. Well my aunty Lou used to live in a tenement, and I mean a tenement, down in Coombe Street. You used to go down Rack Street and there was a little church there and a cobbled yard, ever so frightening it was, all cobbled stones. We used to go down beside this church down a little lane, across a yard and you'd come out in the bottom of Coombe Street. This tenement was on the left hand side of Coombe Street going up. You'd go in this ever so dark place, up some stairs, no lights, onto the landing and you'd open the door and there'd be one room, no gas, no electricity, nothing, just a small window looking into Coombe Street. Now on one side there was a fireplace where they cooked on this fire. Then on the opposite side was a recess and there was a double bed, an iron double bed with a feather mattress and behind that bed was a curtain where the children used to sleep. And they all lived in one room. That was what a real tenement was like, I would never like to live in it. And you'd go downstairs and into a passageway and right out into an awful yard and the smell was terrible - I remember that smell - I suppose that's where the toilet was for all the lot of the people. But you'd always see the women and the men, summer evenings, always outside in Coombe Street, talking or sat on a chair.

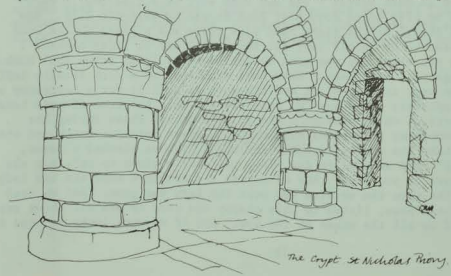
I remember when my aunt used to look after us when mother and father used to do the paper round. She wasn't really my aunt, just a friend of my Mum's and she used to look after my sister and I. She used to go to this evening, sort of like a religious service and it was held in where they hold this Assembly of God in Exe Island. But we never used to go down to Exe Island because if you look at this Assembly of God you'll see a tunnel fixed to Bridge Street and you used to go in an entrance there. They'd never have got them there otherwise. My aunt used to live in Rack Street - she had some sort of a flat over a ware-house - and we used to go down over Rack Street to Westcott Slip. Now down Bridge Street on the right hand side there was a glass double door and there used to be an old lady sit there with one of these baskets I was telling you about and she used to sell sweets: cream brown mint humbugs, brown humbugs, and hard bake. Hard bake consisted of a dark treacle toffee with coconut over the top of it and she used to sell it for a halfpenny a bag. And my aunty would say "Go down and get me a ha'porth of hard bake and a ha'porth of white humbugs", and we used to eat these during the service. Sometimes this woman used to pop a sweet into our mouth and when we used to take the sweets to aunty she said, "You've pinched a sweet, haven't you?" And we used to day, "No, the lady's given to us", but she didn't believe us you know. And of course she couldn't ever ask the lady because by the time the service was over the lady was gone. And we used to sit in these pews, listen to this chappy and used to see all these sweets being passed to all the women in the row. And if we were lucky we used to

have one as well. Then afterwards we'd come out of there and there was a pub across the road and they would have long skirts and boots, the women, and they nearly always used to take a bottle out of their skirts and go in and get a pint of beer and take it home. I suppose going to church was an evening out and no doubt they had an outing in the summer which they could go to, which was something back then. Back then when the people were poor, they used to send their children to these places about three or four weeks before Christmas so they could go to the Christmas party.

ST. NICHOLAS PRIORY

In the Mint was St. Nicholas Priory. Bill Tapp whose mother used to keep the shop used to do some errands for a Miss Tothill and she was the sort of guide and she showed the people around. Now that place was open every day of the week except Sundays. Well, when Bill couldn't do the job any more, I took over. I used to go in up these big steps - it was ever so creepy when you were a little kiddy - and across the big hall and up the stairs and that's where she had her living quarters. She didn't actually live there, she went home, but that's where she used to have her lunches and things. And she used to love her little animals. She had a guinea pig and a rabbit up there in a hutch. I used to go every dinner time and do her errands for her. I used to have to get threepennyworth of mutton bones and get her paper and get her fruit. I used to take that back and I used to get a shilling a week for this.

But downstairs they've got what they call the crypt, with big arches. And in the crypt is a coffin and it was made of stone and the lid was kept opened by a big beam. And you opened a double door and you were in a sort of cobbled yard. In that yard was an aviary. And it was massive. And in this aviary was a raven called George. And when she used to take these people around she used to give George a trilby hat; he used to pick it up by the brim and take it around to ask the people for money which used to help pay for his mutton bones. And George was absolutely gorgeous. He had blue black feathers and he was gorgeous.



In this place where this coffin was, over in the corner was an archway with a spiral staircase all made out of stone and in the corner was a window carved out of stone in the shape of a shamrock. Well one day I went to see Miss Tothill at teatime 'cos I also used to have to go over to the cemetary and get fresh grass every day for the guinea pig so I used to go over there teatimes as well. She said "Don't go out the main door. Go out the side door". Both doors lead into the Mint. She said, "Go out the side way". I said "O.K.". So I went down; the door creaked; shut the door, then I heard her lock the door, and out I go to go out the side door and it was locked. And I couldn't make anybody hear me. And there was I shut in the crypt where the coffin was! I daren't look back at this coffin. I was there what seemed hours but I don't expect it was. And I remember shouting - it was getting darkish - and somebody heard me. And how they got the people I don't know. I think Miss Tothill used to live in Heavitree somewhere which was another world to us. They got me out, but I had visions... wouldn't it be terrible to have to sleep there all night. And this coffin they used to keep the lid open with a beam: there wasn't anything in it but in my imagination there was - it was terrible. But isn't it marvellous? During the war I used to help with the air raid warden and it was where they used to go because it was one of the safest places.

Miss Tothill used to give me a shilling a week and I can tell you exactly what I used to do with that money. I'd put sixpence of that in the Post Office, give threepence to my sister and keep threepence myself. And if it was in the winter we used to take the penny and say, "Which cinema shall we go to?" We used to go to King's Hall which was down in Alphington Street. But Saturday mornings when all the kids used to congregate outside we used to see Tom Mix and all these fascinating people; there used to be a woman, Pearl Something, always chained to a railway line and you'd see this train coming and then the film would stop and it would say, "What will happen to her? Come and see next week." But to get as many children on the seats as possible they used to bring planks of wood in and put them right across the fronts of the seats, so instead of putting two on a seat they could put four.

There was the King's Hall and then coming up Fore Street there was Franklyn's Bug House. My mother used to say, "You kids, you walk in and you ride out". Then just before the top of Fore Street next to the Chev Inn was a cinema called The Lounge; then the Gaumont where it is now in North Street and opposite Bedford Street, Bedford Circus as it was called, there used to be The Empire; then where the Hippodrome was they built the Plaza, then the Savoy and then there used to be the Palladium down in Paris Street and then the Odeon. There used to be a lot of cinemas but then there used to be hundreds and hundreds of people who went to the cinema, because it was cheap enough for a family to go out.

It's different today: they've taken the heart out of the city.

A Lovely Street

MRS F.J. SOUTHCOTT

When I first went to Bartholomew Street to live after the second war, on Easter Day the choir went up on top of the tower of Allhallows Church and sang Easter hymns and they used to be up there about seven o'clock in the morning. Actually it was very sad: all these buildings are consecrated, aren't they, well this church was turned into a corset factory. That annoyed me very much - you could see the corsets in the windows. Then later on they demolished it. Then the parish was taken in with St. Olave's, Father Foyster, and a nice old chap he was too - very, very kind to me when my husband was ill.

We lived at number 32 Bartholomew Street. My husband was born there at number 32 and after the war when we moved from where we were, I wanted him to buy a house out of Bartholomew Street but he always told me that he was born there and would die there and of course you see, he did. And when Mr. Wheaton wanted to extend his factory he asked my husband if he would go to number 36, so we moved to live there. While they were building the factory, I think it was E.B.C. and Sleaman, Mr. Madge, the foreman, came along to fetch me to show me this well that they

found in the yard. And the dome, the lid, was absolutely beautiful, made of stone, all coloured. When I went back to my husband, I said, "If they crack that one up, I'd like to crack them, really it's beautiful". And the fire brigade was there to pump the well out and all the water was pouring down Bartholomew Street but they couldn't empty a spring, could they? What they did with it, I don't know, but it got covered over. The amazing part was that Wheaton's only used the downstairs of the building as a store; the girls used to work upstairs. We always thought that they found damp there.

I used to go into Fore Street to do my shopping. We used to say "I'm going up around the top". Up around the top meant the top of Bartholomew Street, instead of going through the Mint to the city.

When my husband was quite young, about 17 or 18, he used to drive a brewer's dray for St. Anne's Well Brewery, down under the Iron Bridge. And his particular horse was called Acty. When they came up Bartholomew Street, Acty wouldn't pass my husband's door until his mother had come out and given him a bit of sugar. And that was the horse that used to dance at the Horse Parade; as soon as the band started, he started.

There was St. Olave's House for fallen girls in Bartholomew Street - it was the home where the girls used to go to have their babies. You'd see them looking out of the window and they were a right cheery lot. St. Olave's was 32, Bartholomew Street East and ours was 32 Bartholomew Street West and oftimes I'd have to take letters addressed to people up there. And this old dutch used to answer the door, a typical matron, starch and cap and face like a wet week. I used to take the letters up at once but I was always very sorry to say that I couldn't say that for the matron up there. She used to keep them for two or three days, so I got to grips with her one day and told her, and said that I thought it was very bad form not to bring my letters down at once: "I bring yours to you and I expect you to do the same".

Once, when I was living in Bartholomew Street and there was an election coming up, there was an old lady that I used to carry her Sunday lunch to - she used to live in one of the little cottages. When I went up one Sunday just before the election, she said, "Ooh, this lady come 'here and she gived me ten shillings".
So I said, "Did she?"
"Yes and she said if I go and vote for them she'll come and give me some blankets."
I said to her, "Is that it? Well, look, be very, very careful who you're voting for because you know, don't you, they may give you the ten shillings, they may give you the blankets - I doubt whether you'll see the blankets, still, she said so - but you will find that after they get into power things will gradually go back. You won't even get what you're getting now", and I think that was about ten bob a week.

So she said, "I think you must vote for the workers".
I said, "That's right and that's what's cooked your dinner today".

It's a Sad Story

MRS F.E. GILPIN

I was born in the Priory in 1891 and I lived there until I was in my teens. Originally we rented the Priory from a man who had a tea shop and then he sold all that property to St. Wilfred's and then we paid our rent to the convent. That was when St. Wilfred's was in full spate. We had a flat upstairs and the use of the downstair room; we always called that the big room. I had two brothers and we learned to roller skate and we learned to cycle in the big room and we had all our Christmas parties there. We had a dance there when my brother was twenty-one.

I really loved it very much. I had a deep window seat in the bedroom and I had cushions there. Mother used to tell me never to open the window, because I nearly jumped out once. The children underneath said, "Come on, we'll catch you, jump out". Mother caught me just as I was going. She made me promise not to open the window. But I used to love to sit there and read with a cushion at my back and at my feet. I did nearly all my study there as a girl. And the things you could see from that window: I would look down on the Mint, and I saw men queuing with basins in

their hands. There was no dole in those days, no unemployment money, and of course it meant if you were out of work you got nothing coming in. The sisters had a house in the Mint - it's been pulled down now - and they would open the door and serve penny dinners. They gave them a jolly good dinner and it smelt lovely. The smell used to come right up to my window.

I can remember saying to my mother, "What are the basins for?" And she said, "Meat and potato and then if they've another little pot they can have the pudding, rice pudding".
I said, "Do they pay for it?"
And she said, "Yes, they're called penny dinners".
I said, "Couldn't we have some?"
She said, "I'm afraid they couldn't let us have any. It's only for the people where the father can't go to work because he can't get any work". So I said, "It's sad, isn't it?" That's how I met with sorrow as a child. I felt so sorry for these men who had no money to buy meat.

That was one thing that the sisters did; they had to cook it in this house that belonged to them. And then there was another good thing they did here. Next door to the Tudor room in the Priory was a door leading into the crypt and in the crypt was a kitchen which the sisters used to use for boiling saucepans and upstairs they had a row of tiny lavatories for very little children. And the mothers could bring their children, I suppose up to about four years old, but they could bring babies in arms; they paid fourpence a day. The mothers were responsible for the breakfast but the sisters would feed them and if it was babies they would put them into their cots: they had a big nursery upstairs. I used to love going up and seeing these babies in their cots.
The sisters used to feed them and give them clean bottles and at about four o'clock they used to start bathing each child. Each child was bathed before it was sent home and given a clean napkin and when you went in all these clean babies smelt beautiful. Their mothers used to come back at about half past four when they left work. You see for housework they were wanted; perhaps the mother could get wages whereas the father couldn't get work. It was a wonderful creche: the children were well treated, never any yelling, crying - the sisters used to love them.

That was the penny dinners and the creche - two very good things. And there was another thing when I was growing up: Mother Teresa asked my mother if she would lend me to her after school all the week.
"What for?" my mother asked.
"Well", she said, "we've got so many things where we want to send to the grocer or the baker or the candlestick maker. I think she'd be very good and do the work properly". So Mother asked me if I would like to do it.

I said, "Yes, I'd do anything for Mother Teresa 'cos she's always so nice to me". So when I got in I used to go off with a bag full of golden sovereigns. I used to go up to Dickie's in what is now called Martin's Lane. Well there used to be lovely luxury shops there: a poultry shop, beautiful fruit shop and I used to go up there every Monday and pay the bills - always quite a lot of money 'cos they had all their vegetables and all their fruit from them and sometimes flowers as well. I had to take a book, the weekly book, and pay the money. I wasn't very old either and I never made a mistake. Then I used to go to Thomas', that was next door to St. Olave's Church - I think it's a wall-paper shop now. All the candles were bought there for the lamps. There was no electricity in those days; they had to have oil lamps in the convent and they used the candles in the chapel, which was beautiful.

Now where the Norman arches are in the crypt of the Priory is where they think the money was made. Some people say the money wasn't made there but there have been coins found so I know they were made there and there were places where they used to heat the metal. Harbottle Reid used to bring a party of archaeologists every year. He was the chairman of the Exeter Archaeology Society and these others used to come from all over England, about fifty of them. He used to get permission from my mother; he couldn't come into the place unless my mother said, "Yes", because we rented it, you see. She always said he was very welcome to come. And although I was very young I used to listen to all the lectures he gave and he said they used to make the money there. He said the monks used to use the big room as a sort of reception room. He was a very charming man and he gave me a two shilling piece and I put it back in his hand.
I said, "No, thank you".
And he said, "Oh, but I thought you'd like to have it".
"No, I must never take any money from anybody. My mother would be very angry if I took it. Thank you very much though".

FATHER INGLE

Where St. Wilfred's School was, the end house at the top of the Mint, that used to be Father Ingle's house. He was the parson at St. Olave's when I was about four, a long time ago, about eighty years ago. He was taken in a wheelchair when he got old and his man used to drive him and he used to guide the front wheel. And he always stopped when he saw me in the Mint and he'd say, "Would you like a ride, my dear?" 'Cos he knew my father very well 'cos Dad was church warden of St. Olave's at one time. And I used to sit down on the foot part and he used to ride me up to the door in the Mint, by the lamp. Then he'd say, "Pick the little missy a clematis". They grew all over the glass veranda and the man who was driving him, a tubby sort of man, used to pick me one flower and I used to take it home

and mother would say, "Where did you get the flower? Did you steal it?"
"Oh, no, no".
"Where did you get it from?" She said, "I only know one place where you can get them and that's in Father Ingle's house".
I said, "Father Ingle gave it to me. He told his man to pick it and he gave it to his master and then he gave it to me, and said, "Now there's a nice flower - you can take it home and tell your Mummy that Father Ingle gave it to you". I can remember it as if it was yesterday.

When he died I came home from school and saw the ground was covered in brown stuff. Course I walked in the road and kicked the stuff along. I thought, "How did that get here?" When I got home I said to my mother, "What's all that in the road?"
"Oh, it's tannin".
"What's tannin?"
"Well," she said, "they get it from oak trees, the bark. It's to deaden the sound". She said that the horses go along clip, clop, clip, clop. There were no cars in those days, you see, and the wheels were noisy as well, some had rubber on them but nearly all of them were hard. She said, "They put down the tannin to keep the noise away".
"What do they want to keep the noise away for?"
"Well, you see, Father Ingle the old gentleman who used to let you ride on his chair is very, very ill and they don't think he's going to get any better".
"How will that make him better, to put the road stuff down?"
"Well it keeps it quiet for him and then he can sleep".
"Oh," I said, "I wonder if they'd put it down if I was ill".
So she said, "You'd better not try".
Course they had to pay for that. When he died I said, "It didn't stop him dying, did it mother?"

BARTHOLOMEW STREET

It would be the Mayor or one of the high ups in the city spoke to my father and said they very much wanted to turn the Priory into a show place so that visitors could go in and see it: "So if you could get a house near enough, would you be prepared to go?" My father said, "We'd be only too glad".
My mother had said she would like to get a house down in Bartholomew Street because my father's work was in Mary Arches Street, in a factory there; he was the manager. Now my young brother had a friend who lived here at number 30 and his mother, Mrs. Keynes told her boy to tell my brother to tell my mother to come and see her. And she said, "Do you want this house? 'Cos you see I'm leaving - I'm going to live in Northernhay Street. Mother said yes, she'd like it very much. And that's how we came.

My father hated leaving the Priory. Mother had to leave his arm chair in the big room downstairs. And she said "Well if you aren't coming down to the new house, there's your chair, you can stay the night there. We're going, so I'll say goodbye to you". Course he was lonely then in the big room at night, so eventually he came down. "I'd rather have the Mint," he says, "it's much better".

You could never get a house to let in Bartholomew Street - it was like asking for gold. People stayed once they came, not like it is today. People lived here for a whole generation and you would hand on the house to the next generation.

We were friends all the way along. We had a Mr. Hunt; he was the parson down in St. Thomas'. And our dog used to love him and he would follow and go down to the church and go into the pulpit when he preached and lie down at his feet. And you see there was Mrs. Southcott and her husband's people and Uncle Frank and Aunty Anne. They lived further down and the house had big stone slabs leading up to it and a lovely house it was and a nice garden at the back. If my mother was cross with me I used to run down and say, "Aunty, may I come in?"
"Ooh, yes dear". And she'd say, "Mummy a bit cross this morning?"
"Fidgety", I'd say.

And there used to be a church, Allhallows on the Wall; it was a plain ordinary sort of church; there was nothing architecturally worth saving. It was pulled down sometime after 1945. My father used to serve at the altar with Father Pearce when he was quite young, so we used to go there to church and I used to think it was beautiful because you had the doors open in the summer and you could see the trees. It was made a corset factory and the girls used to bring their lunches and throw bits away and the place was swarming with rats. We got one behind the front door here: my next door neighbour put his dog in here and he got the rat by the tail and then he and his son were waiting outside with hatchets and long sticks and they soon got rid of it. Before the girls worked the corsets they had withies brought in and they made baskets - not the same girls - but the withies were full of fleas and they had to stop that 'cos the girls wouldn't work there because of the fleas that came in with the withies. So then they had a corset factory.

After Father Pearce died they had a very brilliant parson at Allhallows, before the war and the church was packed every Sunday. Then the next parson had the church full and when he left there were four people in the congregation - he drove them all away.

IN DECLINE

The sisters of St. Wilfred's worked in the Mint - they should never have left here. They all had a job to do: some to visit the sick people, some to see the out of work people got food to eat, some had to go to the creche to help. There were thirty odd and the novices coming on who had to be trained. They went to all the churches: to St. Mary Step's Church, some to St. Olave's, some to St. Michael's and then they visited the various sick people around the city.

When Mother Teresa died Mother Agatha took over and she was my godmother. I remember Mother Agatha came here, the last place she went. We had a roaring fire and it was a bitter winter wet day and she put her hands out and I felt them - they were like stones. "Oh, you are cold", I said. She said, "I wish we had a lovely open fire like this. It's all gas fires in the convent". And she was dead within three days.

And the convent and the school were beautifully kept, good paint outside the windows and doors: now they've even pulled up the flagstones outside the entrance - dreadful, isn't it? They moved out to Streatham Hall after the war and it was left empty. I said, "What do you want to move out there for?"

Next to the convent was the home for naughty girls, St. Olave's. And there used to be another house similar in architecture just down here but Wheaton's pulled that down to make a place for their lorries to go in. The Council were mad to let that happen - you see it made the street look charming.

Wheaton's bought all that property and they used it for storing and now they've moved out to Marsh Barton. But their drive in place used to be a proper nightmare: the people who lived next door to it went up to Old Tiverton Road to live - they couldn't stand the noise. And the people in the next house have made it beautiful but they can't stand the racket of the traffic going by all the time.

And another thing: there was a whole row of cottages in Bartholomew Street East pulled down. The people were asked to go and they gave them houses in the suburbs and they pulled all those lovely little cottages down. They were only about three and ten pence a week, ten pounds a year. And they faced that beautiful sunset. You'd see them at their doors and at their windows during the summer watching the sunsets, marvellous they were - talk about Italy and Switzerland. That was the whole row starting from the corner shop where that bend is on the corner - that was a huckster's shop, you know, all sorts they kept and then these lovely cottages and they went right to the corner of Mary Arches Street to a shop called Spiller; he sold rabbits, to eat, not tame rabbits, and poultry and eggs; He dealt with the farmers direct. And as you went up Mary Arches Street there were ever so many little shops. On the left hand side there was a shop where they made home-made toffee with almonds on the top, on big black dishes. And right up through there were just ordinary living houses.

And as you came through the Mint was this quaint shop with a round Dicken's window and a tailor used to sit on his board in the window with his legs crossed doing his work. And the next door was a man who did carpentry and upholstery - he seemed to be squeezed in the corner, you wouldn't think a house could be there. Then a house used to come out around and I think they were bill posters and then came the end bit of the Priory. But of course all those shops were all pulled down and it's where the corrugated iron is now.

This part is one of the most beautiful spots in Exeter. I've met people coming through who've come from all parts of the world. Even about a fortnight ago, on a Sunday evening, I was going for a walk along the path between the two cemetaries and I met a lady and gentleman who stopped and asked what this grave was doing here on the corner. I said, "That's the Courtenay's grave and thank God it's there".
"Oh", he said, "why so earnest?"
I said, "If that grave wasn't there, they would have cut the corner of the churchyard right off ... goodness knows we get thirty feet lorries outside of the house now".

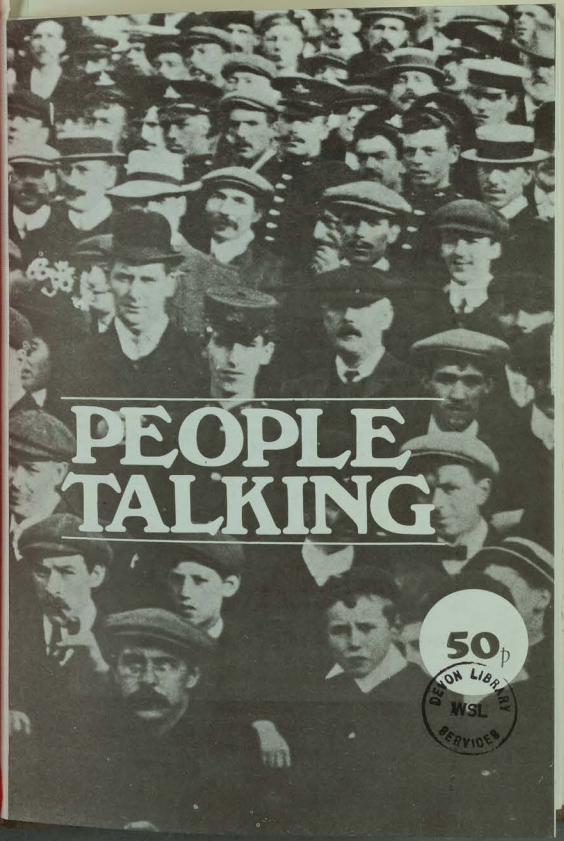
It's a sad story.

REPRINTS OF ALL BACK NUMBERS WILL BE AVAILABLE EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR; AVAILABLE NOW:

VOLUME 5	Carnivals	12p
VOLUME 6	Working Childhoods in Waterbeer and Preston Streets	12p
VOLUME 7	Sidwell Street	25p

FROM:

CASTLES BOOKSHOP GANDY STREET EXETER



DEVON LIBRARY SERVICES
WSL

REPRI
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

PEOPLE TALKING

Here, at last, is Volume 9 - apologies to regular readers who were expecting an issue in December. We remain in the general area of Volume 8 but we're certainly not repeating ourselves.

This is, I am afraid, the last issue that I will be able to do. There are still many people in Exeter with valuable memories so I hope someone else will continue this work.

I have not used all the conversations I have recorded and several people have sent me written accounts of great interest - I just haven't had room to include everything. I would like to thank everybody who has ever contributed to "People Talking" - whether published or not. Without your contributions "People Talking" would not have happened.

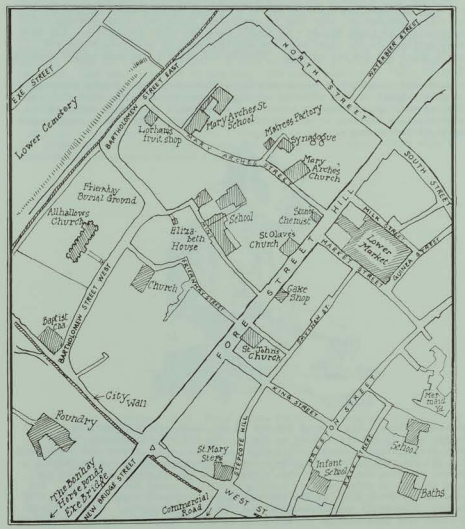
Jenny Lloyd
52, Belmont Road
Exeter.

February, 1979.

Illustrations by Paul Godfrey
(dedicated to h.b.)

cover photograph enlarged by Christopher Proctor.

PUBLISHED BY
CASTLES BOOKSHOP
28 GANDY STREET
EXETER.



A Mary Arches Street Childhood

Mrs H. R. Pollard

I was born on the spot of the White Lion in Mary Arches Street. Where they've got their bar underneath was my mother's cobbled cellar, where we used to have our toilet and copper. She used to stand down there and do her washing under the grating, no light behind - we didn't have any light down there. You know these gratings in the road, well the daylight used to come down there and that's where she did her washing. When it was raining she used to get soaking wet.

I never went to school on Monday morning - always kept home Monday morning, stood on a stool to help with the washing. I was stood to the bath with the dirtiest washing and then I'd pass it to my mother's bath, then she'd carry it over to the copper. It was pitch dark down there. There were toads hopping about in the damp.

We used to have a big room at the top of the house, three flights up, and mother used to dry her washing up there. She did all the washing for St. Mary Arches Street Church: choir boys surplices, altar cloths and everything. She did the washing for Penberthy's the hairdressers, which was in Sidwell Street opposite the Church - that's going back 50, 60 years ago. And she used to take in other people's washing as well to carry out a living. She used to dry it up there in the top room and then iron it with those old flat irons. I honestly wonder sometimes how these people got on. I don't think I could have gone through it, not grown up like. When the washing was ironed it was all stuck up over the kitchen fireplace on the mantlepiece, to air.

We were very poor, but we weren't as poor as some people. I used to go over the soup kitchen with a wash basin jug - it was right over the end of the market - and stand in a queue there. And I used to sit under a stall on the way back and tipple all I could before I got home. And my mother would say, "You didn't get so much today." And she'd make it do two days. I forget what we paid for it - 'tis very few coppers. It was probably only potato and water with a few lentils thrown in to it, but I've never tasted such nice soup - whether it was because I was hungry I enjoyed it better...
An old lady lived next door to us who used to go up the New Market in Queen Street where the posher people went and she used to sit over there and sell cockles. She was called Atkins. I used to have to go back and get her a pea soup. And when I got up to the stall the women would say, "Well, you've been here before." Of course in those days you was flipped and clipped across the ear for the slightest thing. I used to have the work of the devil to convince them it was for this person next door, so I'd only end up with half a jug full in case I was telling lies and then when I got back this old lady - she was a cantankerous old thing - she used to flip me under the ear, saying I'd drunk half of it on the way home, but I hadn't, not hers. They didn't trust me and they gave me half a jug.

My mother was caretaker of St. Mary Arches Church and rang the church bells - she was the mainstay of that church - Minnie Salter, very well known she was in Mary Arches Street for she did such a lot for the church. She rang all the bells: for each service, Holy Communion in the morning, then there was the morning service, then she had a break in the afternoon for we went to Sunday School and then for the evening.

When she was ringing the church bells I used to be in Milk Street beside of the Old Market, listening to the Salvation Army playing. There used to be a little old lady there - I thought she was a hundred - and she had the

highest pitched voice I've ever heard. I used to go just to watch - I was only about six, or seven. And I'd stand there and gape and she used to stare me out, just literally used to stand and stare - I couldn't get over her voice. Then I'd suddenly hear my mother stop ringing the church bells and I knew I had to fly to get into church for 'twas a must for church. You couldn't just stay away.

And I used to sit with mother in church listening to the Rev. Lancefield, making faces at my brother who was in the choir. You know what kids are: tongue out and one thing and another. And Mrs. Lancefield, the rector's wife, sat opposite us and she used to go, "Sssssssh." And it was so quiet in church it sounded like steam coming out of a pipe. And when he talked his teeth whistled and it used to fascinate me. I didn't know what he was talking about.

My mother used to work for them and went out to clean out their house in St. Leonards Road, number 18. I always remember it 'cos I used to scrub the floor boards when I was a child, kept home from school. They were very nice, very, very nice and thought a lot of my mother. On Sundays when the Rev. Lancefield used to come in to take Holy Communion, instead of going all over to St. Leonards before Morning Service which was ten, half past ten, my mother had a room in our house specially done out for him to sit and she used to go up and give him breakfast - I expect he paid, of course - to save him going home. And then she had to pop across to ring the bells for the next service. Sometimes when I was a kid I used to sit up and blow the organ with a man called Victor Pengelly. He used to blow the organ up and I used to sit up there very often with him. St. Mary Arches Street Church was slightly high, 'cos we had incense.

We were fortunate 'cos I had parents that would do for us, where some parents unfortunately didn't. My parents never went drinking so that we had to go without completely. And my mother took in the washing to keep us clothed. I've gone around in sand shoes, used to be sixpence a pair, cut out at the toe, and they used to wear away. If you had a pair of boots bought you, they were two sizes too big for they had to allow for your feet to get into them. You used to slop and clop along, all studs in the bottom all laced up. We didn't know anything else. And if you saw anybody with anything a bit better than you, you thought, "Oh, I mustn't talk to them." There was a family went to the school I went to and they always looked nicely dressed. I used to think to myself, "Cor, they must be ever so rich." But you know when I left school I found they weren't any better off really. It was that somebody in the family worked where they done material.

Between the age for four up to the age of eleven everything's very vivid in my mind. There was such a lot of happiness, and tragedy all in there. If you're hungry you don't forget you've ever been hungry: the little treats we used to have that you wouldn't see today.

We went to Sunday School and if we went on Good Friday, which was mournful and kids didn't like going to the mournful part, but you had a Hot Cross Bun given you free if you went. That was a meal. Nobody stayed away, irrespective of what was going on - everybody turned up for their Hot Cross Bun.

That was given by Miss Knowles. One of the most kindest people that ever was. If it wasn't for her a lot of people would have starved. Her father used to keep the Victory Inn in Sidwell Street. They said the wages she got was £80 a year which was a hell of a lot in those days.

Easter Sunday we went to church and we'd have an Easter egg each. Your parents couldn't buy you an Easter egg - you just couldn't have one. And I've heard my parents say that she'd slip them a shilling - that doesn't sound much - to help them out and not only them: several people in the

street was given quite a lot by this person. She got me to the Brownies at Dixie's Field and paid for me to go to camp. She was an angel in herself, never rewarded - she's dead now unfortunately. She'd take all the Sunday School children to her house for birthday parties. We never had them.

By the church was a cemetery. And the Synagogue is still there. Outside the Synagogue was our play area. There's two little pillars, still there now - they used to look huge to me. We always made sure of being there when the Jews came, with their black top hats. We used to sit there and wait for them to come out and they threw you a penny. My friend's mother used to clean the Synagogue.

In Synagogue Place was a big mattress factory and there was a big fire there one night. I remember this fire very well, 'cos the little girl that I played with, lived opposite in the Synagogue House, was burned. The flames went across - it was very narrow you see - and she'd got burns on her arm.

And the Parish Hall was there where we had the Nativity plays and the Sunday School treats. We'd always get nearest the plate with the cream buns, not the bread and butter - we didn't want that. And we'd eat as much as we could. I've come out blown out, with buns in me knickers, up the legs of your knickers, all jammed up; and the boys used to be jammed up the legs of their trousers - they all wore short trousers. I often think that the people who were serving it out must have known what we did, 'cos you couldn't have got away with it. We had games afterwards and we had jam and sticky cream all in our pants. They never said anything 'cos they knew it was your treat.

We always used to get a Carnival up at the Sunday School. They used to dress our carts down around under the cemetery in Bartholomew Street, and we always won first prize. The men would walk beside with long torches. I remember one year I was the Virgin Mary and when we passed the Seven Stars which was over Exe Bridge where they used to do the judging, I had to sing the Magnificat. Another time we were in was when Yo-Yo's first came out and all us school kids on the cart all had a yo-yo. It was supposed to be our mothers sat there washing clothes and everybody had a yo-yo 'cepting mother. Every year we went in the Carnival and this Miss Knowles I'm telling you about had a big hand in this and Mr. Penberthy with my mother.

In between Milk Street and the Old Market was Woolworths, the first Woolworths. Everything was sixpence. They sold scooters - sixpence for the bottom half and sixpence for the upright part. And it took me in my memory - time as a child is different - nearly 12 weeks to save the shilling. I bought the bottom part first. I thought, well I can sit on the bottom part and move along. Then I had to save to get the top half. And I was scared stiff they were going to sell out before I could get the top half.

I got my money in the market just across the road. You didn't worry about traffic 'cos 'twas only the trams, horses and carts and you did get the odd car. There was an old man who kept a stall inside - he had a peg leg - called Hookway. I used to work for him carrying his sweet jars - he used to have sticky boiled sweets - down Smythen Street to Evans and Gadds. They were the chemists and used to take all the sweet jars in. I used to have to take them down there and when I got back I used to have to tidy up his stall: he used to sell bootlaces, clay pipes and sweets. It was all put in together. And he used to say to me, "You can either have an everlasting strip or a humbug or you can have a halfpenny. I used to weigh it up in my mind where I was going to benefit from all this. You see, I'd say, with a halfpenny I could buy two everlasting strips 'cos they were a farthing each and he was only going to give me one. So I nearly always took the halfpenny. If I was saving for a scooter I put it back, but times I wasn't, I used to wait for Casalucci to come round with his icecream cart and take my cup out. You'd get a cupful of icecream for a halfpenny and he'd stick a waver in the top. And you just sat down and made a meal of it.

When I could first read - I used to love reading - there used to be a man in the market and he sold second-hand comics: Schoolgirl's Own, Billy Bunter and I used to stand over that stall so often reading. He said to me one day, "This don't belong to you you know. Have you ever thought of buying anything?" Very often he used to say it to me, "Have you ever thought of buying anything?" I'd move up and read, and he'd come up again, "Why don't you try buying something?" He got used to me and eventually didn't take any notice.

I used to go through the market to school 'cos I didn't go to Mary Arches Street School. I couldn't get in there - there was too many children. I had to go down to Central. Although I was born and bred in Mary Arches the school was full. Come the age of four it was compulsory to go to school. You couldn't stay at home till five like now or you were summonsed. So my parents had to take me to Naval Rack Street College so I went through the market every day. And I saw Hookway everyday in the dinner hour. There were no school dinners and my mother didn't have much for dinner - bit of bread and marge - so I used to spend my time there, standing on a stool, 'cos I was only a little tacker.

On Saturday nights, the market was open till nine, dead packed - it was a real market. I used to spend hours in that market. We used to jump from stall to stall when it was empty, and when it was full we'd crawl underneath to see if anything was dropping. There was this old lady who'd sit and sell chitlings and when she served anybody we used to sit and pick up the bits that dropped, as soon as they were cold, and put them up the leg of our knickers. She never once caught us - whether she was drunk or no, I don't know.

We had our own area. And you'll find in the town we were segregated into lots. The people who lived down Rack Street and Preston Street didn't venture our way but I ventured their way 'cos I had to go to school there and also my grandmother lived down that way, down Cricklepit Hill, down by the farthing breakfast. So I spent quite a considerable amount of time down there, so I knew both areas.

The West Quarter were even worse off than us - some of them were starving. Some of the people I know who're well off now, starved when they were children. People didn't realise the starvation that went on. But, you see, the quarter, as we called it, people always used to say it was the roughest part of the town, roughs and scruffs. But you take it from me: I've never seen anyone's name in the paper that's committed a crime from down there, real, nasty crimes that is - they might have done ordinary little things that anybody can do, but I'm talking about real crime. They all seem to have gone on and done well.

When I used to go to school I used to stand there, down where the old Bath and Wash-house place was in Kings Street and watch them rowing. They're fighting and rowing and us kids would stand and watch it all and we'd clap. They'd be nearly killing each other and you go down the next morning, you'd see 'em all talking together as if nothing had happened. Darn good row and finish. You see they really loved each other.

I remember when I was a child my mother used to say, "Don't go down the Bonhay." They used to have a Maypole down there and great big guns. When I went down there they used to have little toilets and you used to sit on a box on a trench. But my mother used to say, "Don't you ever go down the Bonhay." 'Cos you got mostly children from the West Quarter - some from our way, but very few. I remember going down there once with a new pair of sandals on, worth a shilling, took them off and went in paddling - there used to be a little paddling part there. And the kids were on, "Oh, you come from Mary Arches Street, you don't belong down here." And in went my sandals and they went out to the canal. I was afraid to go home and one of the girls went home and told my mother and she told me I was to go home. And I copped it when I went home, apart from losing me sandals, for disobeying and going down there. You didn't disobey in those days.

The back of Stones the Chemist in Fore Street came out by our back windows. We had no back entrance but we could look down and see the factory girls working, making up their medicines. I used to take some kids up the top room where my mother used to hang up the washing and watch the women and used to make all sorts of faces at them. And they used to put their fists up to us. But that was our pleasure - if you saw them in the street you wouldn't dare do nothing like that - they'd flip you round the ear.

As a child I never knew that Ladysmith Road or Oxford Road existed - I didn't know it was on the map. I do remember my parents saying, "You are never ever to go down Longbrook Street." And I often used to wonder why and it wasn't till I got older when of course I realised that it was the elite. It was like walking into Buckingham Palace you might say. Now unfortunately it is becoming the downer area of the city. Years ago all those big houses employed servants - Bedford Circus and Southernhay and Dix's Field was all the elite. We were scum compared to them, or they thought we were. Pennsylvania was a snob area and you wouldn't go up there. If you was a child there, you'd be chased off, otherwise you had to raise your hat to them as you walked up through, specially West Avenue. You might as well say, past the bottom of Longbrook Street, going up Pennsylvania was taboo.

My husband lived up the other end of town, beyond the Fountain, outside the City wall. I was born inside the city wall so I consider I'm Exeter born. We were poor but others had less; we had nothing and other people had less. We were worse off than what he was. In the terraced houses up his way they were that little bit better off. It was always, "Don't you ever go up Sidwell Street." If you went, you were belted. It was a different class, you see. You kept to your own quarter.

When my mother died we were living at Burnthouse Lane. I was twelve when she died giving birth to my sister. We had to move 'cos our house was pulled down. When we went out to Burnthouse Lane she used to walk in 'cos there were no buses. She used to walk in to every service, ring the bells and clean the church, right up to when my sister was born and she died. I think she overdid it. I'm not exaggerating but the church was packed and so were the streets, for the funeral at Mary Arches Church. And the clergyman put his purple cloak over the coffin and they don't normally do that. I went into the church the other day - of course it's all altered 'cos it was bombed, but the font's still there where I was christened. I still see the organist who played at my christening. All our family are christened there 'cos it's a tie - the tie you see.

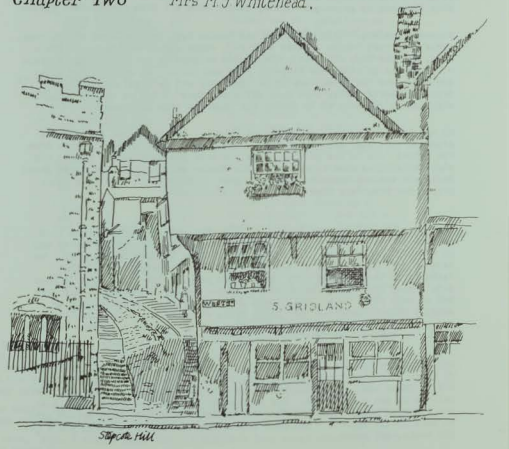
After we left Mary Arches Street we were very very unlucky - we went into an unlucky house I think. Nothing went right: everything went wrong: my mother died, my father died. My father was mostly out of work. He used to do painting and decorating which practically everyone done in those days. When we went out Burnthouse Lane he got 18 shillings a week and that was to keep three children - my oldest brother had left home - and himself, and nine shillings and ninepence per week the rents were: Briar Crescent - that was the rent when they were first built, a three bedroomed house. You just had to live on it. I used to sit my younger brother on my door-step, waiting for my neighbour to put her green leaves in her dustbin; we used to take them out and boil them for our dinner.

I hated it there. I missed all my friends. You're brought up together, you quarrel, fall in, fall out when you're little kiddies. 'Tisn't like you see strange faces. We had someone at our school from Birmingham and we thought it was God Almighty coming to school. We really thought, "Fancy coming from a foreign country like that!" We thought she was a complete foreigner. You knew everybody - it was a joy to go out then. I used to walk up to go to Brownies through the arcade into Dix's Field and home in the dark and never take any notice.

If I was to be born again I wouldn't be ashamed to be born in Mary Arches Street, because I consider that though we were hungry that was the happiest time of my life, except for now.

Chapter Two

Mrs M.J.Whitehead.



I was born at Stepcote Hill in 1897, so you can tell I'm 80. I remember some things of Stepcote Hill. I used to run up and down the steps, down through the centre. There was an old lady who used to sell winkles; she'd sit on a chair and pick 'em out. I can picture that, young as I was.

When we left Stepcote Hill, we went to St. Mary Arches Street to live. And I went to St. Nicholas School, 'cos I'm a Catholic. The Nuns taught us and it was in the days of Canon Hobson, who was a very, very old priest

and very well known. In fact my mother worked in the Presbytry when she was a young girl - when she lived at Whitestone, Nadderwater as they used to call it, so you can tell how far she had to come in. And in her days when they had to go to school they had to walk all from there, into Exeter.

I always remember, 24th May which was Empire Day. And we used to all come, girls with their white dresses with red, white and blue ribbons in their hair, and the boys all nicely done. And we used to have the Maypole there - we used to go round the Maypole, boys and girls. We'd all stand after and we'd have the Union Jack up on the staff and we'd all sing "Flag of Britain proudly waving over many different seas". And we used to sing it with gusto; it used to be lovely but they don't do that now.

My two brothers went to St. Nicholas School. The oldest of the two was Arch and the other was Christopher. Well mother took Archibald away from the school 'cos he was getting older and sent him to Paradise School and when Christopher went to school on the Monday morning the nuns asked where Archibald was and he said, "Oh, he's gone to Paradise." And they all prayed for him, 'cos they thought he'd died.

When we were in Frienhay Street, Christopher, who was years older than me, was put to his trade as a saddler. My grandfather was a saddler and he had his own shop near the corner of the Mint in Fore Street Hill. We used to hear father tell us a story about it. It caught fire and my father said that in they days the firemen pumped with a pump and if they didn't have the beer to drink they'd stop. Course the business was lost and it went right down. When Chris came out of his apprenticeship as a saddler they offered him such small money - and he'd put in seven years and my father wanted him to be a saddler, so he went as a saddler in the Army. He went to the 1914 war and came back alright.

But when this brother used to come home from work, he'd give me threepence to go to this lovely cake shop, there in Fore Street - there's a post office there now. Beautiful cakes; it was two sisters that kept it. He'd tell me to get a seed cake. And he used to give us the money to call at the farthing packet shop and that was in Preston Street. This person used to make it all herself - all hard boiled sweets. For a farthing you'd get the waste, all sorts.

I think my mother in all had about 15 children but she reared four boys and we three girls. She fostered two children as well. The girl, we always call her our sister, must have been about four weeks old when my mother took her. The priest at the church asked mother if she would have her. Lovely little baby she was, really handsome.

My father wasn't a Catholic; he was Church of England, not that he went anywhere. (His father had oil paintings on real canvas of the hunt and the drum clock). We three girls were christened Catholic. My mother's mother was real Irish Catholic and whenever a child was born she used to come in and carry on and they had to go to church and be baptised right away. But only one of the boys was baptised a Catholic and that was my oldest brother.

I left school at the age of 13. And my first job was for a Catholic lady up at Pennsylvania. I went there as a little servant. I had 1/6 a week and my food. Sundays and all I used to go. And Sundays, my father, dear of him, he used always come to meet me. I don't know if you know down the bottom of Longbrook Street, there's a railway bridge - father used to wait there for me to come along. I worked further up in one of the big houses there. And when I got home, mother always had my roast dinner for me. Some nights I used to sleep there. The husband was one of the big noises of Home and Colonial Stores. I used to sleep there when he was away. I slept right at the top. I remember one night when I come down next morning, the lady said, "Did you hear anybody in the night?" I said, "No, why?"

She said, "Well, I went to bed and left the door open and the police came and went all over the place."

I said, "Ooh, I didn't know that. I wouldn't have slept very much if I had known."

When I left there I worked for a sweet factory in Frienhay Street. They used to make sweets and cordial and they were called Allpan. They used to give us a packet of sweets when we'd finished of a Friday. They had a chemist shop in High Street and their private house was in what we call the Walk.

Carts used to come right up Friernhay Street in they days and I used to be afraid of my life to pass if there was a horse there. Up above there were some houses and there was a family there called Moxey and one of their sons used to repair shoes. My mother used to make us take them there. Next to their house was a lady called Mrs. Noble who used to make beautiful corsets. As you came further up was a policeman that lived there and I used to go in and do some errands for his wife. Further down where Wheaton's men would come out from their work and where I worked the sweets, there was a big yard and a house up over and an Italian lived there. He had a daughter and she was called Maria Casanelli - she was handsome. Her father and her brother used to take a cart and he used to sell Ocky Pockies. "Penny a lump, that's the stuff to make you jump," he used to shout out. It was like a solid piece of ice. This girl used to go sometimes with her father. After they left there, the Frenchies used to come there with their onions.

I remember St. John's Church in Fore Street - it's not there now, very old church. Sundays for services the bells used to peel out a hymn: Now the Day is Over. I used to love to hear that, beautiful it used to be. We used to go into the cemetery and my grandmother and grandfather is in a vault there. We used to go in there and play but Daddy Hogg used to chase us out. Then we'd run down Exe Street and we used to love to go and see the horses in the horse pond, in Bonhay Road. And sometimes if we didn't go into the Cemetery, we'd go down the Walk and down over Barbican Steps and at the bottom was houses and there was the horse pond.

And across there we'd go to the Bonhay which was a playground. And if we were going there, for tuppence or threepence we'd pay for a pram off of a woman that lived in Smythen Street and we'd take the children in that and a bottle of lemonade or something. You had to take the little children. There were two big guns in the Bonhay and many a time I've been up on they. Then there was the water. You weren't supposed to go but we used to go in the water. We used to have lovely times there.

In Friernhay Street there used to be a man called Mr. Parsons - we knew the girl and boy. He used to sell fish and go out around with the fish in a barrow. He'd go down to the old fish market that was down the Quay and get it. They used to bring the fish into St. Davids and the men used to go down to the train and then bring it back to the fish market. Saturdays outside the Lower Market where George's Hall is now, for sixpence the beautiful fish you'd have.

And we used to go in the market and play and the policeman in there used to be Daddy Pearson and he used to wear a peaked cap. And he'd have a little cane and if he saw you in there running, he'd be after you and tip you with en. He was a devil. And there was another man who used to be in there quite a lot. We used to call 'e Blind Bob - he was a great big fat man. I think he used to live in Smythen Street and I think he used to go there for somewhere to take him out of his room.

When we went to Mary Arches Street, there were some characters in there. Course there was a Synagogue there and the Jews used to come Saturdays to their place of worship. Opposite there was what they called the Barracks. It was a great big place and let out in all rooms. A mother, father, a brother and this girl, a friend of mine, was in this one room. We used to go up there. And she used to take us into this empty room and say there was a murder committed there and show us this blood stain. Whether it was right or wrong I don't know. Her father was a sort of job man and he worked right out the end of St. Thomas' - you were right in the country. He worked for a farmer and he used to come in with the milk on a yoke. And Fridays he used to come in with the vegetables. He used to take his daughter and me in a trap, horse and cart. I used to love it. We used to go all up round those big houses in New North Road. He'd take the vegetables to them and then he'd bring us back to Mary Arches Street and then 'e'd take the trap back. They was very, very poor. They used to have what they call gribbles, from the pork. When father came home, the candle would be on in the room, spotlessly clean - you

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

could have your food off the floor, no lino. And they used to have these gribbles with boiled potatoes for a meal. I used to think, "Oh, that's lovely."

There was another character and she was Miss Luke and they said she was a lady and I don't doubt that she was. She was very tall and a bit eccentric. She used to write letters to herself. She used to run after the postman when she seen him and say, "Have you got my letter? Have you got my letter?" And she used to have a lovely black capeskirt right down and a bonnet. And under her cape she carried a jug of milk with a saucer. And every cat she saw on her way she'd take the saucer and pour out the milk. And some of the children used to run after and pull her cape and she used to scream. She lived up a passage which went up opposite Mary Arches Street School.

And then there was Mr. Belcher. He used to sell, when it was summer, fly papers. "Catch 'em alive," he used to cry. There was a gentleman called Mr. Stone and Mrs. Stone and they lived in the Priory and kept a chemist shop in Fore Street and if any of us seen 'em coming we'd run to the Priory Gates, great big gates and open them and he gave you a penny for it. Lovely man he was.

And Mr. Loram kept a big fruit shop in Mary Arches Street and if the oranges had something wrong with them, he'd put a big cardboard box there in the street and the children could go and get them. And if you went in the shop and the oranges was a little bit soft he'd give you a bag full for about a penny. They were lovely people.

When we left Stepcote Hill we went to Mary Arches Street, and from Mary Arches Street we went to Friernhay Street and from Friernhay Street we went to Commercial Road. There were these two cottages that we rented. And the stench from the soap factory was dreadful. Mother complained but they said as long as we smelt that we'd never die. We got used to it, but sometimes it used to be dreadful.

Rescue Work

Miss Minnie Rand

I was trained by the Church Army in London as a rescue Worker. Today they're welfare workers, but the welfare of 1932 was in its cradle - it was just budding. We were recognised then and called rescue workers; it's a horrible name.

You see in every city there were girls who come up from the country and round about and they don't really want a job; they don't know what they want. They know a little about prostitution but perhaps not very much. But they found quite a good hunting ground at Exeter in 1932. There was nothing done for them, no special shelters. In London they had special shelters where the girls could go.

My friend and I saw an advertisement in the paper that they wanted two friends, two fully trained women, to run a small shelter in the Mint, Exeter. It was a small house called St. Elizabeth House in the Mint itself, on the corner. It's still there today, not as a home - it's a private house now. And we were to take eight girls. It had a private committee. Private committees today, 1978, are quite gone - it's all got a touch of the state in it. Anyhow we had this private committee of about four ladies and the chaplain to the home. St. Olave's Home was connected with us, the same committee, but there were two separate houses. St. Olave's Home was run by the Deaconess, only for maternity cases.

When we got there, there was no-one in at all; it had all gone to pieces. So we wondered how we could start getting the girls. You can't just go out and say, "Come in dear." So I went to the C.I.D. at the police station. They were very good and they will work with us and help us tremendously. And I said could they in confidence give us the names of about six or eight girls that I might casually look up. And I got the address and the name on condition of course that it was quite confidential. And I went to all these houses and issued invitations to a party. Not one came - not one.

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

We made jellies and all sorts of things. Jellies today are nothing. Jellies in my day you only had at Easter or Birthdays, the poor people. Now it struck me: it says in the Bible someone raised a feast and he went out into the highways and brought them in. So I went out into Bartholomew Street where the home is and I waited for school to come out. And when school came out I got hold of a lot of children and I said, "Where do you live, dear?" And when they lived in one of the streets on my list I'd say, "Oh, do you know so and so?" And they'd say, "Oh, that's my sister." And perhaps that was the very one I wanted. So I said, "Have you got a sister, and have you got a sister?" And I got several of them and I said, "Run home and ask mother if you can come to a party at four o'clock today with Sister Wren. And if mother wants to know who Sister Wren is, tell her to ask Father Long at the church". I thought that would put a touch of respect on it.

Well the children tore in; we were full, many more than eight. Fortunately we had enough food. And they came and had a jolly time. So to the children whom I'd found out lived at the addresses of the eight that I wanted, I said, "Will you tell your big sister what a nice time you had and ask her if she'll come and see me, because I want to meet her. 'Cos you're very nice and I'd like to meet your sister." About four came, about three days after. They actually came. Then the next thing was how to get them in. They were very nice young girls - they hadn't got a job, didn't want a job and they didn't know what they wanted. And the mothers didn't care which was worse and the fathers cared perhaps less or there wasn't a father. But anyhow we started with about three girls.

For some if the case was suitable we had a different arrangement: the idea was when they came, that is if they were really prostitutes, that they'd be willing to go to a long stay home for two years before starting out again. They came to us at 15, 16 and they would be 18 when they started out again. With mother's permission and father's permission of course, but it would take too long to go into the details of all that. I won't say a lot came but in the course of the year we had about 20 girls like that, so that was worth it. They went to a home at Bovey Tracey, a convent. And we used to take the girls, one by one, if they wanted. They had to go willingly, of their own free will.

And when we used to take the girls to this long stay home, my heart used to be rather tender. Two years in a convent.... They knew they were going, they went willingly, <u>but</u> they didn't know till they got there what it was going to be like.

So I used to go to a station two miles before you get to Bovey, and we used to get out there. There was a wood which you went right through to the Convent - a two mile walk. And I'd say to my friend, matron, who took charge inside the home - I used to do all the outside work - I'd say to her, "Will you cut me a nice lot of sandwiches and bits of cake, anything you can spare." And we'd get out at this station and they used to sing their heads off going through the woods. I knew they wouldn't get another chance of shouting and pushing and scratching or have a little fight or anything. We used to be very human going through the woods to the house. And I had tea with the Mother Superior and said goodbye to the girls and that was that. I used to keep in touch with her of course.

When they got there they had a choice of learning how to be a cook or a housekeeper, all sorts of things. And they made three of everything. They were allowed a box of clothes when they came away at the end of the two years: and they had three of everything; three red flannel petticoats, three pairs of drawers; three chemises. Then you were given a good job, chiefly service. I used to place a lot of girls in service. You don't hear of it now.

And I used to say to a girl, "Now, what do you really want to do?" "I want to go into service, I want to do some cooking." And we'd advertise in the Express and Echo. And I would go round to see the lady of the house. That was a very difficult job because when I saw her I used to ask her for a reference. She would rise in indignation: "What do you mean?" "You have asked me what I know about the girl; I have told you and I've asked you to keep confidence." Because they can do a great deal of harm with chit chat and it doesn't give the girl a chance. A girl goes wrong once, it isn't to say she's a bad girl. They used to be very indignant and then to add to the indignation I used to say, "May I see the room that she's going to sleep in?"
"Why do you want to see it?"
I'd explain that we have the girls under our care; we are responsible for placing them, and anyway, work without caring isn't work.

And the bedrooms I've been up into... You'd go up a nice carpeted staircase and then another carpeted staircase, then no carpet, just any old bit of oil cloth and perhaps a dirty, shabby room with a broken chair and a broken basin. Oh the bedrooms I've seen! I've said, "No, no, no, I'm sorry but it's not good enough."
They'd say, "Not good enough? Not good enough?"
It wasn't easy that sort of thing, I can assure you. I'd never let the girls go unless they would be comfortable.

There is a very funny story attached to one girl that went to this particular home at Bovey. She was dismissed after about six months and she came back to us. When she came back she wouldn't tell anybody why. We were great friends, she and myself, and I said, "If I give you my word, really I promise you I will not tell anyone: I would like to know, what did you do?" So she said, "Nothing dreadful."
I said, "Why don't you tell me?"
"Well," she said, "it's all so unfair." That's what kept her back. The psychology of the whole thing is difficult but she really didn't want people to know. So at last she told me and this was why: they used to have a service in chapel and she sat in the front row. The sister who took the service wasn't very young and she had a lot of hair growing on her chin. She gave out for her text from St. John's and she kept holding these hairs and she said, "All these are mine and

more shall be added." Of course it was more than the girl could stand: "All these are mine and more shall be added." The girl said, "I shrieked - I literally shrieked - it was so funny." If she hadn't stroked them it wouldn't have been so bad, but she kept stroking these wretched hairs. Anyway we got her another job and that was alright.

We used to keep in touch with the girls who had left. They used to write to us and we used to write to them. Now and again we got a girl who wasn't any good. There was one occasion we had a girl who left. Now I didn't have much in the way of jewellery but I had really nice gold chain. I was dusting my odd little places and I thought, "My chain's gone." We'd never lost anything. Whoever they took from, they didn't take it from us. This particular girl didn't have any money to turn round on and she saw it, and it was perhaps too much for her. I didn't connect it with the girl. We thought I'd been careless, dropped it or something. You can't always blame people.

Well it so happened that I went to a house to find out about another girl and the woman was wearing my chain. So I said to her, "Would you think it very personal of me? Did you have that chain as a present? Has it got a history?"
"No," she said, "it hasn't. A poor girl came one night when it was very wet, and she said she hadn't any money and nowhere to sleep and if I gave her bed and breakfast she'd give me this chain. I saw it was gold so thought it was worthwhile and I took it."
I said, "Well, it's mine."
"what do you mean, it's yours?"
I told her who I was and all about it and she was such a nice woman and she gave it back. I wouldn't have dreamt of asking her for it - I hadn't any right. It was valuable, sentimentally, to me. "Oh I do think that's nice of you," I said.

You've got to be very human, otherwise you're not good as a worker. If you weren't nice to the girls, they wouldn't stay. You had to first keep your word; if they lose trust in you ... You see they look upon you as something a bit different and it's a lot to live up to - terrific lot: watching you like an eagle, watching you, hoping you'll tell a lie so they can look at you and say, "There, now what about you?"

My friend was a very human creature, she really was. At Elizabeth House you will see there is a long garden in the front - no back at all. And we used to have breakfast, dinner and tea in the summer, all out in the garden. They could throw the plum stones on the floor and relax. They were very happy times and my friend and I gave them as much freedom as we could possibly give. They never went out alone, though.

Take Sundays in a home: you must remember the shops didn't open Sunday and there was only one cinema at one time and that didn't open Sunday - deadly dull place, Sundays, especially in Exeter. The churches were very sanctimonious - they didn't have any dancing, things that you have today, nothing like that at all - it was very dull. We had to go to church once a day on Sunday, from a committee standpoint and also I suppose from the right standpoint. So every Sunday when it was fine we would go to Exwick Church and the sidesmen used to

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

hate us going; I used to tramp in with eight girls, used to sit at the back and they would giggle now and again. I'd get them to kneel; I used to smile at them and whisper, "Quietly on your knees." They had to go and I had to take them - it was awful really. We used to go out before the sermon. I felt it wasn't fair to make them stay; the committee didn't agree with me quite; I won them round. I said, "Try and put yourself in the girls' place, a very academic sermon, it's more than you can expect the girls to take." And when we came out we went for miles and miles and miles, through Nadderwater, right over the hills, singing and dancing and just doing what they liked, really enjoying themselves, till they were thoroughly tired out. And we used to take a big bag of Spanish onions - the girls loved Spanish onions. My friend used to wash them nicely and put a little salt and odds and ends on: Spanish onions, cheese, big loaf, butter, sweets. We'd get back somewhere about half past two or three. And my friend would have a really lovely hot meal, meat pudding, trifle or jam or something, whatever we could afford, because we hadn't much money.

Fore Street Hill

And because we didn't have much money we used to have what is called a pound day. You don't have a pound day today. A pound day is that you have some notices printed of things suggested: jam, biscuits, soap, flour, currants. And I used to take these printed notices to every shop in Exeter and look as pathetic as I could and ask them if they would give me just one thing. And a girl, perhaps two girls would be outside with the pram - we got someone to give us an old pram. And I'd come out with a pound of flour or currants and we used to fill the pram up and go back. It used to help the cupboard tremendously.

Then we used to have sing-songs in the evening and I used to take them to the pictures, about once a month. That was a very difficult time because, you see, to take them to the pictures you weren't sure whether they wouldn't want to go to the lavatory in between and you'd never see them again. But I was lucky - I didn't lose one girl in the pictures, ever.

I lost one girl coming home from an exhibition. We were coming along Cowley Road and there was a man in a lorry and he recognised one of the girls and he gave them a wolf whistle. She was off like a shot and up in that lorry and that was goodbye to her. The lorry was gone before you could say Jack Robinson. Course that made the others very restless; I was afraid I wouldn't get them home, but I did. I kept talking about the pudding we would have, made it look a little bit exciting - when we would next go to the pictures, all sorts of things.

It was very difficult work to keep them willingly all the time. I really only lost one in seven years, so that wasn't too bad, but I mustn't blow my own trumpet.

We had more difficulty with other people in church than anywhere. We had a special pew because they didn't like to sit with the girls, ooh, no, not the holy ones.

We had a priest, a visiting priest, and he was very, very high church. These girls had never been to church, a lot of them. If they had they didn't know the difference between high and low church. In St. Olave's Church it's got a

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

wonderful little pulpit which you sort of go round and go up. This man was going up to preach and as he came up the little winding place, his little black hat, beretta, came higher and higher, and one girl shrieked with laughter, "How much more?" And when he got to the top he took for his text, "Thou shalt see my face no more".

And the girl said, "I don't want to." Only she said it out loud. So of course two or three sort of looked and sniffed, like they would do. But she laughed so much, this one girl, I said, "Will you cough?"
She said, "What do you want me to cough for?"
And I said, "Cough. I'll tell you outside." So she set up a great cough. So I turned to the others and said, "She can't cough any more in here," so I took her outside coughing. I couldn't take her out just for laughing - the others wouldn't understand.

And the chaplain in the home used to have services in the little chapel. He was a dear old man, but he had a dewdrop - I've got one too now I'm old - and he used to be talking about God very earnestly, the girls were very good at listening. Presently you'd hear a whisper, "Watch out, wait for it, here it comes." And then woosh, the dew drop went.

The West Quarter was not only rough, it was ghastly. There was one very large old house where people used to huddle in one room. Today it would be made into flats. And there were about 20 rooms in this house. They had one tap for 20 people and one lavatory, outside. It was really dreadful: the bugs and the fleas and the lice. And the girls who used to come in ... I'd cut through three inches of hair, the whole of it heaving with lice. How they stood it I don't know. We had one girl come in once - she'd let herself go very badly; she was in very poor health and she had tousled brown hair. I said to her one day, "Let me wash your hair."
"I don't want it washed."
I said, "I believe it's going to be rather nice. Let's have a go."
Anyway I washed her hair and she had the most beautiful golden hair you ever saw. You wouldn't have known her. She had blue eyes and with better food and good sleeping, she came to life - she was a beautiful girl. And we had another girl who had a most lovely face, big blue eyes, red lips - she looked an angel and she'd lived with five men. Now our chaplain wanted to see me privately and he questioned me, "Sister, you don't think it's possible you've made a mistake about this girl? She's got such an angel face."
I said, "Rector, you don't understand".

We had one woman who was most interesting. She came to the door - she was a woman of about 40. We said we were very sorry we were really for girls - it was very difficult. She was very rough and raw and said she'd only come if we didn't ask any questions. So my friend and I talked it over and we said, "Stay tonight, but change places with us: you are the Sister and the Matron and you're running a home and you've got a committee and you have someone come and they say, 'Don't ask me any questions at all, anything about my life.' You can't do that sort of thing - you must know a little bit." Anyway to cut a long story short we put it before the committee. But this was the interesting part:

Now my friend was a very keen reader (we didn't have time to read as workers but she had been very keen - she had an academic mind, shall we say) and she found this woman liked talking about books. She got her off her guard and she forgot herself and spoke beautiful English, talking about the details from the books. After a little time of speaking softly and naturally she was so embarrassed and she didn't know how to face us again. All that rough talk was just a sham. She stayed on with us as a semi-worker - she didn't want to move or go anywhere. What she had been we shall never know.

One day we were having a meal in the garden and a very grand lady came in, beautifully dressed, and she rushed into my arms. She said,"Oh, sister."
I said, "I'm sorry, but ..." I didn't know who this grand lady could be.
And she was one of our old girls come back. She said, "Let's all go out. Let's go down to Dawlish, I'll pay everything - and have a really good time."

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOLU
VOLU
VOLU

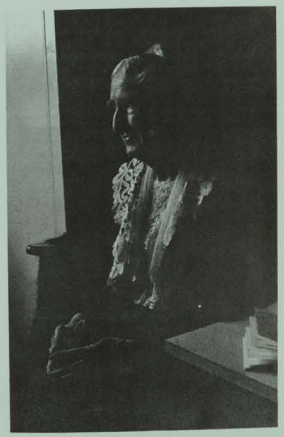
I don't know but you get a kind of instinct and I felt she hadn't got on all that much - beautiful dresses and jewels and everything and she had lots of money. I felt there wasn't something quite straight about it all. My friend - a purer creature than I am, I suppose the devil was with me - my friend believed every word. But it was too good to be true.

Anyway we quickly got ready - the household went, shut up house and went. When we got there there was a fair on. We were rather worried about that 'cos we thought we should lose some of them, but they were so happy and interested in her, it was alright. They went on the horses, had fortunes told, ice creams by the dozen, everything you could think of - they had a wonderful time and we all came back.

Then Frances said to me, "Will you come up to my hotel and have dinner with me." My friend said that would be alright. Some girls she was better with and some girls I was better with and Frances was my girl. I think that's why I saw through her. Anyhow we went up and had dinner and I said to her, "I'm not happy about it all."
"Ooh," she said, "that's alright. He's very good to me."
"Who's the 'he'?"
"Well," she said, "he's got pots and pots of money. He has to go abroad a lot and I've got a lovely flat in London and he only comes home about once in three months. I have a royal time."
I said, "I think I know what you mean."
"Mean?" she said.

But this was the glorious part of it: she made me vow I wouldn't tell matron and I said, "I give you my word." Frances went back to London that night and I went calmly home. Evelyn, my friend, said to me, "It's rather wonderful, isn't it. It's only once a while that we get a real result. Frances is something to be proud of." She was so proud of Frances.

Well committee day came and they said we must give special thanks for this girl and we all prayed and they had this marvellous prayer and gave thanks for this wonderful thing we'd done, all of us, and all their prayers had been answered. And there was Frances living on all this man's money. And we'd devoured all that she'd left - she left us all sorts of things and a donation for the home. The committee grabbed that directly, about £5.00. Then we kept in touch with her in London for a little while. Whether she went abroad I don't know. But that was our protegy and the prayers that went up for her!



Miss Minnie Rand

REPRIN
AVAILA
VOL
VOL
VOL

The cover consists of enlarged details of this photo from a private collection, which is of an Exeter city crowd early this century.

AVAILABLE NOW:

VOLUMES	1 - 3	...	36p
VOLUME	5	...	12p
VOLUME	7	...	25p
VOLUME	8	...	30p